
From: Erin Skoda <skoda.erin@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 10:03 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: Ball, Calvin; superintendent@hcpss.org; CouncilMail
Subject: Please Reconsider Staffing Cuts at Our Schools

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students: music, health assistants, GT, and media paraeducators. These important people are face-to-face with our children every day.

The music department and 3rd grade strings are a source of pride in our county. This program teaches students a useful skill and also gives them confidence and expands their education substantially. Cutting this program would be detrimental to the educational experience of our children.

Health assistants are imperative to give our children a safe environment. They offer frontline care for students with medical conditions. Without them, emergency responses would be delayed, coverage for nurses who may be absent would not be possible, and our students would suffer. These health assistants are a necessary member of our school, especially with the size of our student population.

GT teachers help every student. They teach enrichment lessons to all classes, giving children experiences that they don't receive in their day-to-day lessons. They teach GT math to 4th and 5th grade, which allows non-GT math classes to be smaller. Have a good foundation in math is essential for all students, and the smaller class size and additional levels of math serve all students.

Media paraeducators help our schools' media centers run smoothly. They serve each students in the school. Our media paraeducator helps to create a welcoming environment for all students in our library and performs essential functions throughout the week. Libraries are a source of information and calm, and eliminating these positions would affect all students.

I urge you to recognize and support the indispensable contributions of the individuals in the positions listed above and the value of the programs they contribute to.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: non-essential travel and contracted services.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,
Erin Skoda
Howard County resident

From: stopadsnow <stopadsnow@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 8:49 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org; superintendent@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail
Subject: NO on the proposed budget cuts!

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

To the elected officials and those in power:

I am writing to say that the latest budget cuts are unacceptable. Cut supplies if you must, but not the staff. Anyone voting for these cuts will not have my support in the next election, full stop.

Part of what I love about Howard County is the amazing staff at our school, including each school having both a nurse and a health assistant. The latest proposed cut would jeopardize that standard. HoCo is quickly losing the excellent school atmosphere for which it is known!

Here is a reminder of what the latest proposed cuts threaten, and the purpose of existing staff. Do NOT cut staff!

What Our School Health Staff Really Do:

Our nurses and health assistants are indispensable. Their roles extend far beyond basic first aid:

Complex Medical Care: They manage chronic conditions like diabetes, seizures, and severe allergies, including writing care plans and administering critical care.

Student Advocacy & Support: They act as case managers for medical 504 plans, ensuring students' needs are met, and connect families with essential health resources.

Public Health & Prevention: They run vital clinics for hearing and vision screenings, flu shots, and dental visits, and meticulously monitor vaccine compliance for the entire student body.

Emotional Support: For many students experiencing anxiety or distress, the health room provides a safe, caring environment and a trusted adult to talk to.

The Dangerous Impact of These Cuts:

Reducing our schools to just one medical professional would:

Compromise Safety: Severely limit the ability of our nurses to practice safely and respond effectively to emergencies.

Overwhelm Staff: Place an impossible burden on the remaining nurses, potentially leading to delays in care.

Risk Student Well-being: Directly jeopardize the health and safety of students with chronic conditions and those needing immediate attention.

Stand strong with the parents and educators of HoCo by voting against these cuts!

Sincerely
Heather Blake
Dunnlogin resident

From: Jackie Dutrow <jackie.dutrow@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 4:11 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: superintendent@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education, Dr. Ball, Members of the Howard County Council, and Superintendent Barnes,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year. I am particularly concerned with the reduction in elementary GT offerings and the elimination of 3rd grade strings.

It is shocking to see so many proposed cuts, AGAIN, in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), particularly in a county ranked #7 in wealth in 2023 by US News and continual property tax increases. These cuts continue to be devastating to our entire county and detrimental to our county standards of education. I urge our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

It is the duty of the school system to meet the needs of students, including those that struggle and those that excel. My child is a bright 4th grader who has had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the GT seminars, lower elementary CEUs and GT math with the school's GT educators. They are his favorite classes and keep him engaged in a way that his homeroom classes cannot always provide. To reduce funding in this area would be a detriment to children who are craving a deeper learning experience and wish to be challenged beyond the typical classroom experience.

For example, Northfield Elementary School has 2.5 G/T (Gifted and Talented) Teachers. A reduction to 1 G/T Teacher at NES would mean:

- The GT teacher would only teach 1 section of 5th grade math. The other section would be taught by a classroom teacher with no experience in grade 7 common core math standards.
- Other math classes in grades 3-5 will increase in size to accommodate no GT teacher.
- Curriculum extension units (CEU's) will be taught when possible by GT teacher and probably will need to be taught by a classroom teacher in grade 3.
- Primary Talent Development lessons in grades K-2 will need to be taught by the classroom teacher.

- Seminars will be eliminated. Seminars are student interest based and provide opportunities for ALL students to grow and learn about something new. Topics include: creative writing, STEM topics, Drones, 3D printing, math logic, and Unheard Perspectives.
- These cuts would create so much more work for the grade-level teachers, especially grades 3-5.

I also want to remind our elected officials that music education, in all of its forms, plays a pivotal role in shaping well-rounded individuals, fostering creativity, discipline, and teamwork. My child's involvement in 3rd grade strings not only enriched his academic experience but also contributed to his overall personal development. It is terrible that teacher's jobs are at risk because HCPSS does not see the value in giving our children the opportunity of learning a string instrument at this point in their education.

Research consistently highlights the positive impact of music education on academic performance. Students engaged in music often show improved cognitive skills, better concentration, and enhanced problem-solving abilities. These benefits extend beyond the music room and positively influence their academic achievements.

I understand the budgetary challenges that HCPSS faces, but I urge you to consider the invaluable contribution that smaller class sizes, challenging curriculum and music programs make to our students' lives. By investing more in HCPSS overall as a county, we are investing in the future leaders, artists, and innovators of our community.

I kindly request that you work together to solve any proposed cuts to teacher funding, GT programs and music funding and continue to support all programs that are considered well-managed and essential in our county.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Dutrow
Northfield Elementary School Parent

From: Jessica Plevy <jessicanplevy@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 5:17 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org; superintendent@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input regarding the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I strongly urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students—particularly Gifted and Talented (GT), music, and Health Assistants. These programs are vital to the academic, emotional, and physical well-being of our children. The GT programs my children have participated in have challenged them as advanced learners by offering enriched and accelerated learning opportunities that keep them engaged and motivated. Likewise, music education supports cognitive development, emotional expression, and social connection, while fostering discipline, creativity, and a lifelong appreciation for the arts. Together, these programs contribute to a well-rounded education and help our schools meet the diverse needs and talents of all students. Eliminating or reducing funding for these areas would undermine the very strengths that make our school system vibrant, inclusive, and future-ready.

I am also deeply concerned about the potential elimination of Health Assistants. My stepdaughter, Allie, has seizures, and her safety and care depend on the presence of a trained health professional during the school day. Removing this critical support could have serious consequences for students like her who require medical oversight.

Before making cuts that directly impact students, I respectfully urge the Board to consider alternative reductions in areas with less direct influence on learning outcomes. These might include streamlining administrative overhead, limiting non-essential travel and external consulting contracts, improving energy efficiency in facilities, or deferring non-urgent capital projects. Additionally, collaborating with

neighboring districts to share services and tightening supply and procurement budgets could yield meaningful savings.

I appreciate the complexity of the budget process and the many difficult decisions you face. Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency, equity, and student-centered decision-making. I hope you will consider these alternatives to ensure our students continue to thrive.

Sincerely,

Jessica Plevy

3724 Valerie Carol Court

Ellicott City, MD 21042

301-332-2621

From: Jyoti Lal <jyotee02@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 5:52 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: [SUSPECTED SPAM] Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students like ***GT, music, Health Assistants, media paraeducators.***

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas like ***administration, non-essential travel, contracted services***

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,
Jyoti Lal
Ellicott City

From: Karissa Bryant <Karissa_Bryant@hcpss.org>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 10:14 AM
To: Bill Barnes; CouncilMail; BOE Email; Board Member's Email; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Please save 3rd grade strings

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Hello all,

First, I would like to say that I value what y'all do for HCPSS and that I know you are in a difficult position. I have watched so many meetings over the last few months and I have a greater understanding of the situation than I did before. I understand that each of you has different concerns and values, but I would like to share some of the ways that keeping the 12 music staff would benefit the areas of concern I've heard y'all talk about.

I have only taught in Title 1 schools in PGCPSS & HCPSS and I can attest that music is for all students - it is not elitist or only for students whose families can afford private lessons, however if we destroy elementary music programs by eliminating 3rd grade strings, it could become that way. I have taught students who cannot speak any English but excel in music because it's our common and universal language. I have taught students who are twice exceptional (meaning they are G.T. And also receive Special Education services) they find the limitlessness of music exciting, their creativity blossoms in the possibilities music offers. I have also taught students who don't feel like they fit in at school, suffer from mental health issues and face challenges we all wish young people wouldn't have to deal with, but in 3rd grade they can become part of an ensemble that works together, where everyone is valued and important. Music is a safe way for us to express emotions that can otherwise be difficult to put into words, but with one song we can communicate those feelings to others. It unites and strengthens us. This community values music education and 3rd grade orchestra. I am attaching our [concert videos here](#). The kids had so much fun, the 2nd graders are already excited for next year. I can't walk down the hall without them telling me what they want to play and what songs they want to learn next year! Music brings up [test scores](#) too, but it's important in its own right.

Please restore the music positions, GT, library paras, health assistance - we are the people who interact with children every day. We care about them our programs matter and should not be cut to create new positions that do not interact with students.

Thank you for reading.



PLES 3rd Grade Orchestra Performance Spring 2025

3rd Grade Orchestra PLES Spring Concert 2025

docs.google.com

Karissa Strawley (she/her)
Band & Orchestra Teacher
Phelps Luck Elementary School
karissa_bryant@hcpss.org
[Ms. Strawley's Instrumental Music Website](#)

From: Katherine Fink <kkmason@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 3:40 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: superintendent@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail
Subject: Budget Cut Concerns

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year. As a parent of a **Type 1 Diabetic**, I am extremely concerned with the cuts to Health Assistants. Northfield Elementary only has 1 health assistant and 1 floating nurse. If my daughter has a severe diabetic incident, who would be there for support? Is the expectation that teachers know how to administer Baqsimi (a nasal spray if she were to be unconscious)? Within our school alone, there is another Type 1 Diabetic, one student with epilepsy, one with hypoglycemia, and so many other student needs.

Secondly, as a family of two kids in GT programs, the cuts to GT would greatly impact their learning potentially. The GT program for math allows our students the opportunity to be pushed where other classes move at a slower pace. The expectation that a classroom teacher is to teach 7th grade common core math standards with no experience or training is alarming and not effective.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: 3rd Grade strings, Paraeducators for Media, non-essential travel, and administrative/backoff jobs.

The cut proposed puts my daughters life at risk and if implemented, would require my family to find schooling that actually puts the health and welfare of children first.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,
Katherine Fink
Northfield Elementary School
Cell: (703) 795-3911

From: snap@howardcountymd.gov
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 9:50 AM
To: Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity
Subject: Case: CS0069866 – opened and unassigned



Case

Short Description: Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

Case Number: CS0069866

Case Opened: 06-12-2025

Constituent:

[VIEW CASE](#)

Details:

06-12-2025 09:49:34 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby Additional comments

From: ke ren <renkemallee@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 12:13 AM
To: Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail
<CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>
Subject: Request to Retain 3rd Grade Strings and Elementary GT Program
in Scenario 7

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Howard County executive and county councils,

I am writing to respectfully request that the 3rd grade strings program and the elementary Gifted and Talented (GT) program be retained in the approved Scenario 7. These programs are vital for maintaining high teaching standards and providing equitable opportunities for all students to

thrive and reach their full potential.

As a parent of a student in elementary school in Howard county, I've seen firsthand how enriching and impactful these programs are for young learners.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support of our children's education.

Sincerely,

Ke Ren

howardcountymd.gov



Ref:MSG6286529

From: Kelley Flesher <kellyflesher@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 9:04 AM
To: boe@hcpss.org; superintendent@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Keep Health Care Assistants!

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Elected Officials,

I am a parent of a Bonnie Branch Middle school student and a concerned member of the Howard County community. I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I'm very concerned about the significant decrease to health care assistants. As none of the BOE members have a healthcare background they can not understand the importance of this role in the wellbeing of our students. Students at HCPSS attend school with acute and chronic illnesses. It is critically important to have the correct staff present as time matters in emergency situations.

Our health care assistants are responsible for not only the student population but our teachers as well. One nurse alone can not meet the needs of an entire school.

Health care assistants are vitally important in our school system. To balance the budget, please find additional reductions in non-school based expenses.

I also ask all elected officials to continue to work together to find additional revenues and creative solutions for our students.

Sincerely,
Kelley Flesher
Ellicott City

From: Kim Meah <kgoldman_umich@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 2:29 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; meg_ricks@hcpss.org
Subject: HCPSS Proposed Cuts

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

To All Whom It May Concern:

I am a parent of 5 children who attend HCPSS. We moved to Howard County before my oldest child started Kindergarten. One of the main draws to moving to Howard County was the excellent public school system. I strongly feel that the proposed cuts, particularly to the elementary GT programs and 3rd grade strings would have an extremely detrimental effect on the quality and distinction of the school system. Providing GT and orchestra opportunities at an early age allows for all children to reach their potential and has a lasting impact later in life.

As the child of 2 professional violinists, my parents always instilled in me the importance of music, and how important music is at a young age. I can confidently say that if the 3rd grade strings is removed, Howard County will not have the same level of musicians in later grades. In addition, many studies show a positive link between music and many different aspects of learning and education.

I understand there is a budget, but it seems that there has to be a better resolution than to cut funding to critical programs that enhance the excellent quality and well-rounded education that Howard County is known for. In order to continue to create opportunities for all students, I am pleading to not cut elementary GT opportunities as well as 3rd grade strings.

Thank you for your time and attention,

Kim Meah

From: Lisa Andraca <lisa.andraca@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 6:59 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students including health room assistant positions, Elementary G/T positions, 3rd grade strings positions, and media paraeducators.

- School health rooms are at the front lines of ensuring safety and readiness to learn. Health assistants provide not only clinical care, but also compassion, reassurance, and continuity in the lives of students - many of whom face barriers to healthcare access outside of school. Personally, our child Josh has a life-threatening allergy to peanuts and other food allergies that can make him quite ill. We work closely with the school nurse and health assistant to ensure a care plan is in place, necessary medications are ready and available and not expired, and that in case of an emergency or need of an epi pen, Josh knows who to go to and how to communicate with the health room staff. This relationship is very important to us and many other families at Dunloggin whose children have chronic or acute illnesses.
- My son Josh benefited from a robust G/T program at Northfield Elementary when he went there. He was able to participate in G/T Math, curriculum extension units, and seminars. These classes were some of the most challenging and preparatory classes for middle school. I attribute his ability to adjust to the demanding G/T schedule in middle school to having had exposure to G/T classes and curriculum in elementary school. I strongly encourage the preservation of Elementary G/T positions so as to continue developing strong students and to prevent added work to grade-level teachers who are already struggling with large classes and heavy workloads.
- Please reconsider the cut of 3rd grade strings. You would be severely impacting the quality of one of the greatest public music programs in the world. My son

Josh benefited from elementary school band which provided him the tools and foundation of musical development. I, myself, was exposed to music at a very early age at school and went on to sing in community and school choirs into college. This musical training not only provided me with important developmental experiences but so much of what I learned through music impacts my mindset, motivation, and work ethic today.

- The Elementary media paraeducator position is a crucial component to the library media program. It is the only para position that services the full elementary school student body. This is a vital role which should be maintained.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: *administration, non-essential travel, and contracted services.*

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,
Lisa Plummer

3717 St. Johns Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042
(919) 536-2270

From: Maria Villani <maria@thewendyslaughterteam.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 7:49 PM
To: board@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Concerned Community Member

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[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education, County Council and County Executive,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students: [Insert programs you believe should be maintained that are slated to be eliminated in Scenario 7—e.g., GT, music, special education, school health staff]

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: [Insert proposed cuts—e.g., administration, non-essential travel, contracted services]

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions. Dr. Ball we know you experienced first hand our 'small but mighty' community at the 100 year celebration at West Friendship earlier this spring. I am on the exec board for the PTA and have seen what a wonderful community we have and know how detrimental these cuts will be to the staff, students, and community at large.

Sincerely,

Maria Villani

Marriottsville, MD

Maria Villani

**The Wendy Slaughter Team @
Vybe Realty**

Pricing Strategy Advisor

Military Relocation Professional

NAR Green Designee

cell: 410.499.2082

office: 410.730.2200

linktr.ee/mariavillanirealestate

From: Olivia Souweine <oliviagkelly@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 1:34 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org; superintendent@hcpss.org; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail
Subject: Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education and County Executive,

As a very concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve the following essential programs and services that directly impact students: elementary GT program, music, and Health Assistants. My kids are in elementary school and these cuts would really have an impact on them and their school. Loss of these programs do a direct disservice to our kids and our community. Howard County is consistently ranked high in the nation as not only a great place to live, but also as one of the best school systems. Maintaining essential programs should be a priority.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: non-essential travel, contracted services, reducing positions for athletic trainers and coaches.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,
Olivia Souweine
Ellicott City

From: Rachel Plotnick <rplotnick@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 7:06 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: About those budget cuts...

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[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Subject: Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

To: boe@hcpss.org

CC (optional): County Council members and County Executive

councilmail@howardcountymd.gov, cball@howardcountymd.gov

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students. The GT program allows class size to be smaller for all students. The 3rd grade strings program is the starting block in a creative journey for so many future musicians and non-musicians.

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: bus transportation, central office or even increase class size. Music, GT are what gives our diverse student body a chance to shine in all areas. Don't take this away from the children.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,

Rachel Plotnick. Ellicott City, MD 21042. Proud parent of 3 children in Howard County.

From: snap@howardcountymd.gov
Sent: Monday, June 16, 2025 8:51 AM
To: Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity
Subject: Case: CS0070186 – opened and unassigned

Flag Status: Flagged



Case

Short Description: Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

Case Number: CS0070186

Case Opened: 06-16-2025

Constituent:

[VIEW CASE](#)

Details:

06-16-2025 08:49:51 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby Additional comments

From: Tu Hui Brian Choi <tuhui.choi@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 4:10 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Ball, Calvin <cball@howardcountymd.gov>; superintendent@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Reconsideration and Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of Howard County Board of Education,

I am writing to express my profound concern and disappointment regarding the proposed budget cuts to Northfield Elementary School, particularly the elimination of the Gifted and Talented (G/T) and music programs. As a member of the Howard County Public School community having 2 children attending the school, I believe these programs are incredibly vital to the development of our kids and the cultural fabric of our town. The loss of these programs would not only diminish the quality of education but also have lasting negative effects on our students and the community as a whole.

The G/T program serves as a critical resource for identifying and nurturing the talents of our most academically advanced students. By providing specialized instruction, the program ensures that these students are adequately challenged and engaged, preventing boredom and disengagement. The absence of such a program would lead to underutilization of student potential, potentially resulting in decline in academic performance. I strongly believe that such programs where gifted students who are not appropriately challenged often experience a decline in academic achievement and motivation. Without the G/T program, Northfield Elementary risks losing its ability to cater to the diverse needs of its student body, thereby compromising the principle of equitable education for all.

Specifically speaking about the music program at Northfield Elementary is more than an extracurricular activity; it is an essential component of a well-rounded education. Our kids play both piano and strings, our oldest the violin and youngest the cello, and music education fosters creativity, discipline, and teamwork, and has been widely linked to improved academic performance and social-emotional development, and students involved in music programs often exhibit higher test scores and better attendance rates. Eliminating the music program would deprive students of these benefits and diminish the cultural richness of our community.

The repercussions of these cuts extend beyond the classroom. The G/T and music programs are not merely academic offerings; they are integral to the cultural and social life of Northfield. Their elimination would signal a devaluation of the arts and advanced learning, potentially leading to a decline in community engagement and pride. Furthermore, such cuts could have long-term economic implications. A community that invests in quality education and cultural enrichment is more likely to attract families and businesses, thereby supporting local growth and development. By reducing these programs, Northfield risks undermining its appeal as a vibrant and progressive community.

I strongly urge for your reconsideration, the proposed cuts, specifically to the G/T and music programs at Northfield Elementary would be a significant loss to our students, our schools, and our community. These programs are not expendable luxuries; they are essential to providing a

comprehensive and equitable education. I urge the school board to reconsider these cuts and explore alternative solutions that preserve these invaluable programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response and hope for a resolution that reflects the best interests of our children and community.

Sincerely,

Brian and Sophia Choi

howardcountymd.gov



Ref:MSG6306184

Respass, Charity

From: Brittany Jacobs <brittanyplaysviola@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 11, 2025 10:44 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; Budget Testimony
Subject: Fund the Budget

Flag Status: Flagged

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Dr. Ball and County Council Members,

Please direct funding into the HCPSS budget to avoid program and staffing cuts. I implore you to demand the Board of Education use the fund balance and support as shared by Dr. Ball. Our school system is what draws people to Howard County. Funding the schools funds our future. Our students, educators, and families deserve 3rd Grade Strings and Elementary GT, and a fully funded school system. We are all counting on you.

Please - this is our last chance.

Respectfully,

Brittany Jacobs

Sent from my iPhone

From: Dan Dutrow <dan.dutrow@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 2:26 PM
To: BOE@hcpss.org
Cc: superintendent@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Urgent: Preserve Educational Excellence and Retain Top Teachers in Howard County

Flag Status: Flagged

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Dear Education Leaders and County Officials,

I write with urgent concern regarding the proposed \$9 million budget reduction for HCPSS, specifically the cuts to elementary GT programs, elimination of 3rd grade strings, and the potential loss of our most qualified educators.

These cuts are particularly troubling given Howard County's ranking as the 7th wealthiest county in the US (2023). Our exceptional teachers – especially those with advanced certifications and specialized training in GT and music education – are crucial assets who:

- Possess deep subject matter expertise and advanced instructional techniques
- Have invested years in understanding our community's unique needs
- Build lasting relationships with students and families
- Drive our schools' consistently high performance
- Attract families to our district, maintaining property values and community strength

The proposed reductions would:

- Severely limit GT instruction and advanced math programming
- Eliminate valuable student seminars in STEM, creative writing, and other enrichment areas
- Remove crucial early music education opportunities
- Increase class sizes and teacher workloads
- Risk losing our most experienced teachers to neighboring districts with better funding

At Northfield Elementary alone, reducing GT teachers from 2.5 to 1 would drastically impact:

- Advanced math instruction quality
- Curriculum extension units
- Primary talent development programs
- Enrichment seminars serving ALL students

Research shows both GT programs and music education significantly enhance cognitive development, academic performance, and student engagement. Moreover, teacher quality is the single most important school-based factor in student success. Cutting these programs and risking the loss of our best educators will have long-lasting negative impacts on our students and community.

I urge you to:

1. Preserve current GT staffing levels
2. Maintain 3rd grade strings programming
3. Protect competitive teacher compensation and benefits
4. Develop sustainable funding solutions that retain our top talent

Howard County's reputation for educational excellence depends on your action. Please work together to find alternative budget solutions that don't compromise our children's educational opportunities or our ability to retain outstanding educators.

Respectfully,
Dan Dutrow
Northfield Elementary Parent

From: Erika Lee <mserikaanderson@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 2:56 PM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Preserve GT Programs and 3rd Grade Strings – Community Input on Budget Reductions

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[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned parent and member of the Howard County community, I am writing to urge you to preserve the Gifted and Talented (GT) programs and the third grade strings program as you consider the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions.

Both of my children attend Northfield Elementary School and have benefited tremendously from these programs. The GT program has challenged them academically, nurtured their curiosity, and built their confidence. The third grade strings program sparked a love of music and discipline that continues to enrich their education and personal growth.

Cutting these programs would limit access to advanced learning and arts education at a critical stage in students' development. These offerings are not extras—they are essential to supporting the diverse talents and needs of our students across the county.

To meet budget goals while protecting these core programs, I encourage you to explore alternative reductions in areas such as administrative overhead, non-essential travel, or contracted services that do not directly affect students in the classroom.

Thank you for your commitment to student-centered decision-making and for supporting the continued success of all HCPSS learners.

Sincerely,

Erika Lee

mserikaanderson@gmail.com

From: Lena F <mymiscinfo@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 9:42 AM
To: boe@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: School Budget

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students: ***GT for elementary schools, health room assistance and media paraeducators positions.***

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: ***administration, non-essential travel, contracted services, busing students to different schools to achieve perceived social engineering objectives where everyone suffers, including students who are supposed to benefit from t his.***

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,

Evelina Zaychik
3812 Graceland Ct
Ellicott City, MD 21042

From: Evelyn Teng <shirw9@icloud.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 7:51 AM
To: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin; boe@hcpss.org; superintendent@hcpss.org
Subject: We DO NOT Support Teacher and Program Cuts

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[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear County Executive Ball, County Council Members, Superintendent Barnes, and Board of Education Members,

We are all extremely concerned about cuts to our valuable teachers and programs. In recent communications, County Executive Ball assured the community that the school system had what they needed not to make any cuts to current staff and services. However, the Board of Education has announced the elimination of 51 elementary teaching positions. These cuts contradict your statement and raise serious concerns about transparency and communication between county leadership and the BOE.

Cutting teachers and programs harms our students. The community has made its stance clear: we **do not** support these cuts. With more than 2,000 emails and 1,200 supporters for this petition, (<https://www.change.org/p/protect-howard-county-s-teacher-and-student-programs?signed=true>) the community has made clear that we want to protect our teachers and programs, not eliminate them.

Also, there is a lot of confusion and frustration over the allocation of funding. We were told that the school system received more funding than last year, so why are these many teaching positions being eliminated? If we truly had enough funding, these cuts would not be necessary. And if funding is insufficient, why are we cutting staff members who work directly with our students, yet *adding* new positions that do not even work directly with students in the classroom, like full-time athletic trainers and instructional coaches. Members of the BOE have said we must prioritize "the important things" like math and reading, yet you decided to cut **graded** classes and added **extra-curricular** positions in its place. **Yes, 3rd grade orchestra and GT are both graded classes that appear on students' report cards.**

We should prioritize using those funds towards existing teachers and programs, not adding new ones that we can barely afford. Telling the community that the school system received more funding than last year is unproductive if none of that funding is used to protect our existing teachers and programs.

The current priorities are deeply concerning. Funding projects like walking trails and pickleball courts while cutting classroom positions sends the wrong message about what our county values. The community is speaking loud and clear: we want to **protect our teachers and programs.**

Please consider the real and long-term consequences of these decisions. Our students, teachers, and families deserve better. We need leadership that protects classroom instruction and supports the educators and programs that make Howard County schools exceptional.

Sincerely,
Evelyn Teng
HCPSS Family

From: Girija <girija.gujar@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 11:48 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS fundin

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Dear Board of Education members,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Girija Bhingarde
Sent from my iPhone

From: Hilary Lovell <hdlovell@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 12:21 PM
To: Bill_Barnes@hcpss.org; meg_ricks@hcpss.org; antonia_watts@hcpss.org; jolene_mosley@hcpss.org; jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; andrea_chamblee@hcpss.org; jacquelin_mCoy@hcpss.org; linfeng_chen@hcpss.org; boe@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin; superintendent@hcpss.org
Subject: Please Reinstate 3rd Grade Strings and Avoid Restructuring ES Music
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[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Superintendent Barnes and Members of the Board of Education:

I am writing as a concerned parent to respectfully urge you to restore funding for the 3rd grade strings program in our schools. This program not only introduces students to the joy of music at a critical developmental stage but also anchors the structure of our entire elementary music education system.

Eliminating 3rd grade strings will likely result in the widespread reassignment of our dedicated music teachers across the board, severing meaningful relationships they have built with students, families, and school communities over many years. These teachers are integral to our school culture and their stability is essential to student success.

Please do not let budget constraints come at the expense of educational equity and enrichment. Music is not an extracurricular luxury—it is a core part of a well-rounded education. It sets up the student brain for better learning across all subjects, such as math. I have seen first-hand how 3rd grade strings has given my children more confidence in trying new things and presenting in front of large groups. 3rd grade strings helps our Howard County students be high achievers.

Additionally, GT classes, nursing assistants, and media paraeducators are all needed. Eliminating 3rd grade GT will make all math classes larger, which will then make it much harder for each student to learn. Eliminating nursing assistants is beyond dangerous. Schools being knocked down to only a nurse without a nursing assistant cannot handle all the kids seeking care. Our elementary school has 50-60 kids go to the nurse's office daily. If the nurse is attending to multiple kids already, they can't possibly be able to respond immediately to a bigger emergency in the gym or a classroom. Media paraeducators are crucial in students' learning the love of reading in so many ways.

Howard County is known for an amazing musical education. Why hurt it? Cutting 3rd grade strings will absolutely make a negative impact. Howard County residents pay large taxes and are drawn to the county for the amazing school system. Making cuts to student-facing positions lowers the quality of the education, which in turn will hurt the reputation and lessen the draw of people to the county willing to pay the taxes. This will hurt the county as a whole over many years to come.

Thank you for your time and for considering the voices of our community. Our amazing Howard County school system cannot afford to eliminate these positions. The negative impact is not worth it. Please reinstate these student-facing positions.

Sincerely,
Hilary Lovell
Northfield Elementary, Burleigh MS, Centennial HS
District 1

From: Kelly.e.durkin <kelly.e.durkin@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 10:00 AM
To: board@hcpss.org; CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Cc: Husband
Subject: Letter from my 3rd grader

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Good morning,

I hope you will read the attached letter from my HCPSS third grader, Braeden Sussman.

Thank you,
Kelly Durkin

Dear Mr. Calvin Ball, county
council, and Board of Education,

I am a 3rd grader at swans
feild Elementary School.

This year I joined 3rd grade
strings and I play the viola.

It makes me feel proud and
special to be the one playing the
music and not just listening to it.

I am always excited to go to practice.

My orchestra teacher, Mrs. Lahan,
shows me the beauty of music.

Mrs. Lahan is all ready working
at two schools I want more
time with her not less. If
next years 3rd graders have
to wait another year they want
be able to advance like us.
ITS NOT FAIR !!!!!!

A year is too long to wait for
some thing that makes kids want
to go to school. I think you
shouldnt cut anything
about are schools because learning
is super important.
From: Brown ps. please find us
some money.

From: snap@howardcountymd.gov
Sent: Monday, June 16, 2025 8:53 AM
To: Smith, Brenda; Anderson, Isaiah; Gelwicks, Colette; Respass, Charity
Subject: Case: CS0070201 – opened and unassigned

Flag Status: Flagged



Case

Short Description: Support for HCPSS Operating Budget

Case Number: CS0070201

Case Opened: 06-16-2025

Constituent:

[VIEW CASE](#)

Details:

06-16-2025 08:52:32 AM EDT - Christiana Rigby Additional comments

From: Neha Wagh <nphatarpekar@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 12:08 PM
To: executive <executive@howardcountymd.gov>; CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>; Yungmann, David <dyungmann@howardcountymd.gov>; boe@hcpss.org
Subject: Urgent Appeal for HCPSS funding

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Board of Education members,

I am writing to express my sincere concern regarding the potential program and staffing cuts in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). I believe it is important that the Board of Education ask the County Executive

for the money needed to maintain our current level of services and comply with the new Blueprint mandates. If we want to continue to have one of the country's best school systems we need to make it a priority. I am also writing to implore you not to cut funding for GT programs and 3rd grade Orchestra . Additionally reducing staffing and increasing class sizes will have an impact on the quality of education our children receive.

Students and teachers have already endured increased class sizes over the last few years. This news is devastating to our entire county. We urge all of our elected officials to work together with HCPSS to help during this crisis and continue to solve the funding issues that seem to plague the system every year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Neha Wagh

Get Outlook for iOS<<https://aka.ms/o0ukef>>

howardcountymd.gov



Ref:MSG6306294

From: Shiowei Cheng <shio.the.way@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 9:44 AM
To: board@hcpss.org
Cc: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin
Subject: Community Input on Remaining \$9M Budget Reductions

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Members of the Howard County Board of Education,

As a concerned member of the Howard County community, I am writing to share my input on the remaining \$9 million in budget reductions for the upcoming fiscal year.

I urge you to preserve essential programs and services that directly impact students: ***elementary GT and 3rd grade strings***. Both of my sons have greatly benefited from these programs and services. My oldest has far surpassed grade level proficiencies on all tests (including neuropsychological and IQ tests) and the GT and music programs help him to stay engaged in learning and encourage him to enjoy school.

My youngest is also on track to be highly engaged in the music and GT programs. He is also performing high above grade level in all areas and would be able to grow into his own potential with these programs.

I believe that third grade strings is crucial to building lifetime skills. As a former music teacher myself, I know that starting in third grade provides students with skills for a lifetime to not only be musicians both amateur or professional, but gives them skills to succeed in all aspects. People outside of Howard County wonder why our students in particular are usually such high achievers in whatever road they pick, and I think giving them all such opportunities as learning a string instrument in third grade, that as you all know teaches self reliance, confidence and responsibility, along with music skills, might be key in that success. It builds unique synapses in the brain that later in life allow for higher level thinking (which is scientifically proven).

To achieve fiscal responsibility, I suggest considering reductions in the following areas: ***administration, non-essential travel, contracted services***. I would also suggest that HCPSS require payment from students who enter athletics programs.

Thank you for your continued commitment to transparency and student-centered decisions.

Sincerely,
Shiowei Cheng

3512 Lowlen Court, Ellicott City, MD 21042

From: Jessica Estrogano <jessica.estrogano@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 13, 2025 2:15 PM
To: CouncilMail; Ball, Calvin; Jones, Opel; CouncilDistrict1@howardcountymd.gov; CouncilDistrict2@howardcountymd.gov; Rigby, Christiana; Jung, Debra; CouncilDistrict4@howardcountymd.gov; Yungmann, David; Skalny, Cindy; Knight, Karen
Cc: boe@hcpss.org; Linfeng Chen; Jolene Mosley; andrea_chamblee@hcpss.org; Jennifer_mallo@hcpss.org; Jacquelin McCoy; Antonia Watts; meg_ricks@hcpss.org
Subject: FY26 Howard County Budget
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Howard County Council,

I am writing to you as a deeply disappointed parent of a Jeffers Hill Elementary School student and as a gravely concerned community member.

The County Executive and County Council continue to fail the most vulnerable members of this community - its children. I, along with many other Howard County residents, engaged Dr. Ball and this Council several times during the fiscal year 2026 budget process to advocate for our students and our community. My councilmember, Mr. Jones, has yet to return a phone call or email I've left with his office in the past three years. The canned responses I receive from Mr. Thompson are inflated gaslighting at best. School and library funding comes from the same budget allocation, but the council continues to send the message that the county does not have enough funding for schools and puts on a facade that it is making hard decisions when, in reality, this council has approved use of \$143M to build an unnecessary Lakefront Library. Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Board of Education asked for approximately \$30M above Dr. Ball's proposal this year and were told that there is simply not enough funding - this is patently false. This county has plenty of money. The problem is a County Executive and County Council that refuse to make ethical decisions.

Jeffers Hill Elementary School celebrated its fiftieth anniversary this year, and has never had a renovation. Our school is overcrowded, underfunded, and underserved. We are Title 1 eligible, but Howard County drew the line above us, so we do not benefit from Title 1 funding. This is unfair to every single child at our school. The children in this county need and deserve to see the gap closed between what HCPSS needs and what the County Executive proposes and the council approves in the county budget. Once again, you failed to do this. The County Executive's press releases say that this council allocated more funding to HCPSS with the FY26 budget than previous years and while this is technically true, it is not the whole truth. HCPSS has received a smaller percent of the county budget year-over-year for at least the past five years, and the amount received is simply not enough to maintain the current

school system, much less to provide for sufficient infrastructure, staff, and other resources to truly support our community.

Because the council unanimously approved a budget that funds luxuries such as new libraries and art centers over necessities such as a sufficient quantity of schools with enough space and staff to support our students, the Howard County Board of Education had no choice but to make impossible decisions for FY26. Last night, the Board of Education cut 102 positions across our schools. This includes 12 third-grade strings teachers, effectively eliminating third grade strings across the county; 39 gifted and talented teachers, effectively eliminating that program in elementary schools; 21 elementary school paraeducators that are the lifeblood of our schools; and 12 high school secretaries.

This will result in needless suffering for every child in HCPSS. Larger class sizes, less staff, staff that will be more overworked than ever, results in a diminished educational experience for every child in the school system. Staff will leave the county due to low morale and burnout, and HCPSS will be a shell of what it once was. I chose to raise my family in Howard County because of its public school system. The school system is the reason Howard County residents pay higher prices for homes and higher property taxes. With the school system put into voluntary decline by this council, the incentive for families to stay in Howard County is gone.

This council, specifically Mr. Jones, Ms. Rigby, and Mr. Yungman, consistently vote in favor of development and, as a result, overcrowd and degrade our schools. This council consistently does not give HCPSS the budget to hire more teachers and staff, build new schools, or even to keep up with deferred maintenance. This is deplorable and unacceptable.

Please do the right thing and fix the budget issues you've created with over development and no infrastructure support. Please stop making our children pay the price for poor decision making by adults. Fully fund HCPSS at the HCPSS Board of Education's budget request every year. Doing anything else is a direct attack on our children.

I will not vote for Mr. Jones at reelection and I will relentlessly advocate for all residents of this county to vote against all of you at reelection. You have completely failed our community.

Jessica Estrogano

From: Kristen Bacon <Kristen_Bacon@hcpss.org>
Sent: Sunday, June 15, 2025 1:17 PM
To: BoE Email
Cc: Terry Eberhardt; Megan Hartten; Bill Barnes; Kathleen Carter; Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail; Casey Schurman; David K. Lerner
Subject: A Sad Chapter in my Student's Educational Journey
Flag Status: Flagged

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Hello,

I would be remiss if I didn't send a response to your decision. I appreciate the intricacies of budgeting as someone who does it with my own family, and I also know that what I do is based on a smaller scale. Choices must be made, and priorities must be set collaboratively. As I return from bereavement leave, I will now say another goodbye in three short days to a community that I have been a part of and loved for seven years. I'm not writing this to get sympathy, but I would like to make a few points that seem to have been forgotten when the financial bottom line was prioritized.

As someone who believes in music and music education to reach ALL students, I was truly disheartened and disappointed by multiple statements heard throughout this process. No, not all students can learn to read music from an app, just as media literacy and empathy cannot be taught by an app. That conjecture was a statement to justify a vote and was used to ensure that the priority wasn't music education in this budget cycle. For those of us who are experts in our field, we know that students cannot learn content standards and authentic experiences from an app, or we wouldn't have public education and teachers.

The sentiment that ALL of our students who want to do music in third grade will just get private teachers/ lessons/ find another way is again, a justification for a decision and a gross misrepresentation of music education. There will be outliers, but you've created a wealth gap for music education in Howard County, a system that has publicly touted a focus on equity for several years. If you were to check the data for my current school population, you would see that no, recurring private lessons will not be feasible for most families in our community. This year alone, I loaned over 100 HCPSS-owned instruments to families who needed access to them to participate in instrumental music. In third grade alone, only three families out of forty-eight could provide their OWN instrument. You've now put forty-five families at a disadvantage because of their economic situation. Their children won't benefit from crucial fine motor skills practice, decoding, letter recognition, math connections, and a social-emotional connection with a trusted adult. Not to mention musically, they are another year behind those who can afford early private music lessons.

As someone who has worked in education for 18 years, who has taught at Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools, in this county and another, being at Stevens Forest in a Community School has been the highlight of my career. Our school has made leaps and bounds of progress in connecting with students, decreasing chronic absenteeism, and growth in math and reading, all a testament to the model and the implementation by my administration and our Community Schools Coordinator. We have pages of data to prove this. I volunteered my time to become well-versed in the Community Schools model and supported numerous evening events. In the mornings, I arrived early to help students practice when I didn't have bus duty; I had a bus duty that included, for the past seven years, being at a crosswalk greeting every student and family by name and building relationships. I was awarded a Bright Minds Grant to bring drumming, emotional regulation, and attendance up for third through fifth-grade students. Sadly, the program cannot continue without someone to facilitate it, because, due to the recent budget cuts, there will most likely not be a full-time instrumental music teacher at SFES next year. I teach students to play instruments in Spanish so that all students are reached, which I hope the next instrumental teacher(s) will be able to do, but I can't be certain. Our SFES kids are amazing, talented, and some of the best musicians I have ever taught, and no one can convince me otherwise.

Year after year, I have invited the School Board, County Council, County Executive, and Superintendent to witness our amazing musicians at our annual Spring Concert/ SpringFest, which grew from a necessity out of COVID precautions to the most well-attended SFES event. It now includes a community resource fair and access to community-focused resources, including our new and amazing Judy Center with a musical storytime throughout the concert. Not one person from these organizations has come to see the connections that we have made. Through music, alumni return to play or reconnect and other educators from our school and around the county voluntarily attend to help or to be a part of something magical. I understand that you were all busy debating the budget, but to not be aware of something so amazing, and to say that we don't have educators making connections or volunteering their time is a false and hurtful statement. To say that anyone can learn music, and that students can do it if their parents find another way outside HCPSS, is a straw man argument, meant to undermine the blood, sweat, and tears of our music teachers. To say that music in our community isn't a priority is a lack of awareness.

My late grandfather always said to treat those around you like you want to be treated, and to be honest, you have lost me. The way our passion, our jobs, and our desire to reach children through a different lens than the classroom teacher has been mocked, and reduced to being numbered to find out where we will be placed next year or how much can be saved if we are cut, is not the way anyone in the field of education wants to be perceived. You want authentic connections and the best for all students, but when you treat people with their own families, their own "stuff going on" like a number, that sends the opposite message. Reading and math coaches do a wonderful job, but their role is to support the teachers and not instruct and assist students every single day like media paraeducators, teacher's secretaries, music educators, or GT teachers.

Music will continue in Howard County, elementary media will continue without paraeducators, and high school front offices will function, but for many HCPSS students, they have lost an incredible opportunity to connect with adults who care about them through no fault of their own. This is my story of what I, as one employee, brought to my students, community, and school. I'm sure there are a plethora of these stories that seem to have been forgotten so that a bottom line could be reached.

Kristen Bacon
Elementary Instrumental Music Educator #?
2025-26 School(s) Unknown

From: Mehreen Hossain Rashid <mehreen.hossain@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 17, 2025 12:03 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: HCPSS Concerns on Proposed Budget

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Dear Council Members:

I am writing to encourage you to increase the budget provided to the Howard County Public School System so that cuts in current levels of services do not need to be made. I understand that difficult budget decisions must be made in the coming year, but the levels of cuts being considered do not support our students and teachers, nor represent the quality education programs that Howard County is known for. Please consider cuts to programs other than education in Howard County.

In particular, I ask you to strongly reconsider the decreased funding proposed for the Gifted and Talented program. As a parent of a current 3rd grader at Waterloo Elementary School, I have seen firsthand the impact of the G&T program on cultivating academic excellence and furthering active engagement among the student body. This year alone, my 3rd grader was able to hone engineering, writing and presentation skills through Safe Racer sponsored by the G&T program. Her team placed 1st in the school-wide competition, and it was a moment of pride for my daughter who appreciated the hard work they put in as a team to earn the top honors. In addition, my 3rd grader developed research and public speaking skills in another G&T class by selecting to learn about Mae Jameson, the first African-American female astronaut. These opportunities are important to cultivate early on among high achieving students in public schools so they can be on equal footing academically with students in private schools. Please reconsider fully funding the G&T program for HCPSS.

In addition, I am disappointed in the funding cuts being considered to the orchestra strings program in the 3rd grade. My daughter started learning violin from a wonderful, dedicated music teacher at Waterloo ES and will now begin private lessons to continue her love for music. Please do not take away this opportunity from future 3rd graders like her younger brothers and those whose families may not be able to afford private lessons.

I urge you to reconsider the most recent funding cuts in support of our students, staff and nurses in HCPSS.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Mehreen H. Rashid

(Parent of a current 3rd grader and 1st grader at Waterloo ES)