



## *Harford County Public Schools*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **STATEMENT REGARDING THE PUBLIC SCHOOL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD (PSLRB) RULING IN THE MATTER OF:**

#### **HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND HARFORD COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.**

On Monday, April 2, 2012, the Public School Labor Relations Board (PSLRB) issued a ruling regarding the negotiations matter between the Harford County Education Association (HCEA) and the Board of Education of Harford County. The PSLRB ruling confirmed that Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) bargained in “good faith” with HCEA during negotiations last school year by dismissing five of the six allegations made by HCEA.

The HCEA claim alleging that Harford County Public Schools renegotiated in “bad faith” by meeting its obligation to submit reconciled budgets to the Harford County Council in April 2010 was upheld. The PSLRB deemed that the timing of the budget reconciliation process was inappropriate.

The school system has filed a petition for judicial review of the PSLRB’s decision in the Circuit Court for Harford County as it believes that the part of the decision relating to renegotiations for the 2011-2012 Fiscal Year negotiated agreement was erroneous.

“The Board of Education of Harford County is looking to reach a favorable and timely conclusion to this process,” said Harford County Board President Dr. Leonard Wheeler. “It is the responsibility of this Board to make the best decisions for our students.”

The decision by the PSLRB not only affects Harford County but has long-reaching statewide implications as well. School systems throughout the state are paying close attention to the initial decisions from the PSLRB as they will set precedent throughout the state regarding negotiations.

“The local school system superintendents have been impressed by the openness and inclusiveness with which the new Public School Labor Relations Board (PSLRB) has begun its work. We appreciate the opportunities they offer for input and look forward to future collaboration. There are many issues that will need to be sorted out over time under this new structure. Revisiting and redefining settled law was a major concern that the superintendents shared during the 2010 legislative session,” said Carl D. Roberts, Executive Director of the Public School Superintendent’s Association of Maryland.

Roberts added, “Unfortunately, the PSLRB’s decision in Harford County does not support the legislative history and intent regarding renegotiations. The local superintendents’ position remains that the local board of education retains the final decision-making authority after renegotiations occur and this view was supported by the Office of the Attorney General in 2010. The stance of the superintendents and attorney general on this point was confirmed by the proponents of the legislation that established the PSLRB. The PSLRB decision in Harford fails to uphold this premise, unnecessarily confuses and prolongs



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the negotiation process, and challenges the fiscal relationship between the local board of education and the county government.”

In addition, local boards of education are also taking note of the impact this decision will have on the function of the local board with respect to the negotiation process.

“The PSLRB decision in this case highlights why it is so problematic to have a new labor relations board, instead of local boards of education, make the final, and binding, decisions on teacher and employee contracts, including annual pay raises. The negotiation of teacher and employee contracts is a core function of local boards of education; boards comprised of active and informed community members dedicated to fulfilling the mission of their local school system to provide a high quality education for all children. Local boards of education, which are accountable to local constituents on policy priorities and fiscally dependent on state and local revenues outside their control, must retain the authority to make final budget decisions and communicate these decisions to employee organizations at the bargaining table. The importance of maintaining local board accountability to negotiate employee contracts within the boundaries of available local government funding cannot be overstated,” said John Woolums, director of governmental relations of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education.

For more information on the Collective Bargaining process and to read the [full report from the PSLRB](#), please visit the Board of Education of Harford County’s [Collective Bargaining webpage](#).

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