

Office of Strategic Initiatives

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BLUEPRINT
for our students' future 

Public Comment to the Maryland State Board of Education

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRmawYsLE4w>

April 25, 2023

Good morning, President Crawford, Superintendent Choudhury, and Board members. My name is Katie Ridgway, and I am the Director of Strategic Initiatives and the Blueprint Coordinator for Harford County Public Schools. Thank you for this opportunity.

On April 14th, Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly released his proposed budget for FY24. For the first time in our records dating back to 1988, our county executive is providing less money to the school district than the year before, 19 million dollars less actually. 39 million dollars less than the already pared down HCPS budget request. This is an unprecedented defunding of local public schools in Harford County.

One justification Mr. Cassilly has stated for this budget cut is that HCPS has received record state funding. His statements have no deference to the record requirements of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The state legislature's investment in the Blueprint was not intended to supplant county governments' funding responsibilities. The Blueprint is designed to level the playing field for all students, but our county executive's underfunding will create inequities in our region, especially considering our neighboring Baltimore County executive's record investment in their district. This shows that politics can skew equal access to the initiatives required to prepare our students for their futures and to ensure adequately funded, well-rounded schools.

The HCPS FY24 budget expands Blueprint necessary support for special education students, English learners, schools with high concentrations of poverty, college and career readiness, and more. A few big-ticket specifics include:



Free dual enrollment and post-CCR pathways (which more than exhaust and exceed the state funding allocation);



2.3 million dollars for our local workforce investment board; and



required career ladder salary increases. Our entire salary package is 19 million dollars, which is the amount reduced from last year's budget by the county executive.

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The Blueprint funding does not include vital, irreplaceable local initiatives, such as safety and security, fine arts programs, middle school innovation, our brand-new middle school athletics program, agricultural curriculum pathways, and so much more.

I am here because this is not simply a local budget dispute. I am here because it is imperative for state education officials and all state stakeholders to hear Harford County's experience for future support of our district, future legislation, and collaborative advocacy.

Through the Blueprint, the state has made a historic, bold, and necessary commitment to investing in each and every student no matter where they live, but through the Harford County Executive's budget, 38,000 students are now facing a historic reduction in their opportunities, and this should not be acceptable to any of us.

Thank you,



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Email us at AskHCPS@hcps.org or give us a call at (410)809-6193.
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