

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 18, 2023**

## **County Executive’s Proposed Budget a Disaster for the Children of Harford County**

*Bob Cassilly is Mortgaging Our Children’s Future for Political Grandstanding*

In what has been described as a “worst case scenario” budget for our Public School System, County Executive Bob Cassilly shows he doesn’t care about the children of Harford County, and instead plans to use them as pawns in his game of politics.

The FY2024 budget proposed by Mr. Cassilly *reduces* the amount of money received by Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) by \$19.4 million from the previous fiscal year’s budget and \$39 million below the Harford County Board of Education’s request. This is the equivalent of reducing spending by \$1,000 per student. Never in recent decades has a County Executive in Harford County proposed to give HCPS *less* than the previous fiscal year. This attempt to underfund HCPS is only possible following a law that passed the General Assembly in 2022 allowing for a one-time reduction of Maintenance of Effort. In one of his last votes as a State Senator, Bob Cassilly voted against the law permitting the reduction.

If the Harford County Council allows the budget to pass as it currently stands, there will be significant changes that directly impact students. Without a significant increase to funding, HCPS will see higher class sizes, athletic participation fees will no longer be waived, and teacher salaries will no longer be competitive with neighboring districts. As it stands now, the budget will make it near impossible for HCPS to continue to attract the best recruits possible to work in our schools and to continue to support the outstanding educators already working for our students.

Mr. Cassilly has further focused his ire on the public school system and attempted to stir political conflict by deliberately spreading fallacies in an attempt to garner support for his budget proposal. He has made numerous false claims, including;

1. Harford County Public Schools has a bloated and overfunded Central Office.
2. Most Central Office Employees are still working remotely.
3. Harford County Public Schools has an available fund balance of \$92 million.
4. He is fully funding Harford County Public Schools as required by State Law.

The reality is:

1. HCPS has one of the most efficient Central Offices in the state. Administrative positions in HCPS account for only 3% of the overall budget. Furthermore, data tracked by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) on system expenditures shows HCPS is 24 out of 24 school systems for overall cost spent on administration.
2. Mr. Cassilly is further spreading false allegations that “most” of the Central Office staff works 100% remotely, when only approximately 25 of employees (a small fraction) work 100% remotely. This allows us to avoid having to rent office space to house those employees.
3. HCPS does have a healthy fund balance, but nowhere near \$92 million is available for the district to spend. Much of the money Mr. Cassilly is referring to is earmarked for expenditures based on the FY23 budget but has not been spent yet. The unassigned fund balance is approximately \$36 million.

4. Mr. Cassilly is misleading the public by stating he is “fully funding” our schools. While he is technically meeting State Law, he is only doing so by utilizing a one-time reduction of Maintenance of Effort. In reality, he is providing the minimum amount allowed by law with a \$19.4 million reduction compared to last year.

“Bob Cassilly is mortgaging our children’s future for political grandstanding,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Sean Bulson. “He is pandering to a conservative political base, one that doesn’t believe a quality education is critical to the success of a greater community. This deplorable budget is the worst-case scenario for our children. If it goes unchecked, it will cause a greater issue in the future and further undermine our ability to continue to offer a quality education to the children of Harford County. Your children deserve to continue receiving the best education possible.”

By cutting funding to HCPS, and Harford County Parks and Recreation, and by flat funding Harford County Library and Harford County Community College, Mr. Cassilly has shown he doesn’t believe in the future of Harford County. He doesn’t believe in supporting the needs of our children. Mr. Cassilly is attempting to balance a budget at the expense of our greatest gift: our children.

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