

Office of Communications

Jillian Lader, Manager of Communications

Jillian.Lader@hcps.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Harford County Public Schools Responds to County Executive's Proposed FY27 Budget

The County Executive's proposed HCPS FY27 budget falls critically short of the Board of Education's request by \$15 million. The proposed budget is insufficient to cover the rising costs of maintaining current services, meeting State requirements under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, addressing the evolving needs of our students, and fully supporting all of our staff by funding the Board of Education's wage package negotiated with our unions.

While the County Executive asserts that the proposed budget fully funds teacher salaries, that claim does not reflect the full financial reality facing Harford County Public Schools. The budget must first cover required, nondiscretionary costs, including special education non-public placements and other statutory obligations. Because these obligations must be funded, presenting the remaining funding as fully available for salaries is misleading. The funds are insufficient to support all of HCPS fiscal needs and the full negotiated compensation package for educators and staff. The County Executive's stated intentions exclude valued and necessary staff in and out of the classroom. Whether you drive a bus, keep our students safe, or ensure students have meals, all HCPS staff support teaching and learning.

In County Executive Cassilly's press release on April 15, 2026, he references a budget agreement made between himself and a former superintendent. We are seeking to move forward; County Executive Cassilly is intent on remaining in the past. Our focus is the current needs of our students, and on working collaboratively with present leadership to address them.

It is also important to remember that in the 2023 budget cycle, Bob Cassilly used maintenance of effort legislation to historically reduce funding to HCPS. The impacts of that decision continue to reverberate throughout HCPS. When the County Government compares current year's percentage increases to other counties, it fails to transparently acknowledge that the starting lines are not the same, and this tactic purposely misleads the public about HCPS financial realities.

More broadly, the County Executive's approach creates unnecessary division at a time when collaboration is essential. This is reflected not only in public messaging but also in the framing of the proposed budget as fully supportive of HCPS. We hold a different view of what meaningful support looks like. It includes direct and ongoing dialogue, respect for the contributions of all staff who support teaching and learning, and clear, transparent communication with the public about both the resources provided and the obligations we must meet.

When developing our budget, our community has made clear its expectation that HCPS protect instructional quality, class size, safety and security, programs, and our aging buildings. These are local priorities that require local funding.

The Board of Education's proposed budget maintained current class sizes and levels of service across the school system, sought minimal additional resources to support early learning, and supported a wage package negotiated within Board parameters that would allow HCPS to meet the Blueprint-required minimum starting salary of \$60,000 for new teachers.

If County Executive Cassilly's proposed budget is approved, balancing the budget will require difficult tradeoffs that directly impact services for our students, staff, and community. Insufficient funding from the county means HCPS and the Board of Education now face critical decisions.

"We are being asked to do more for students in a rising-cost environment, with more complex needs, while maintaining high standards for teaching, learning, safety, and community partnership. That requires funding that reflects today's realities," said Interim Superintendent Dr. Dyann Mack.

HCPS remains committed to responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. We carefully evaluate spending, identify efficiencies, and prioritize resources where they will have the greatest impact. Behind every dollar is a student counting on us to get it right.

"Teaching and learning is happening in Harford County Public Schools. We will continue working collaboratively with the Board of Education to advocate to all county leaders for the resources our students deserve," Dr. Mack added. "Our focus remains on ensuring every student in Harford County has access to the high-quality education they need to succeed."

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