

## **Communications Office**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 5, 2026**

### **Response from Board of Education of Harford County President Lauren Paige to June 3, 2026, County Executive Press Release**

The June 3 press release issued by County Executive Bob Cassilly raises a number of questions regarding Harford County Public Schools, budget development, organizational decisions, and operational practices. As with all personnel matters, HCPS follows established processes to review concerns, investigate allegations, and take appropriate action when warranted.

Let me be clear: The Board of Education takes any allegation involving ethics, financial stewardship, accountability, or operational practices seriously, including concerns raised by a former Supervisor of Accountability who is no longer employed by Harford County Public Schools. We have a responsibility to taxpayers, students, parents, and employees to ensure concerns are reviewed thoroughly and fairly. If wrongdoing is identified, it is addressed appropriately. We do not ignore legitimate concerns, nor do we prejudge matters before the facts are fully reviewed.

What is concerning, however, is the County Executive's continued effort to use isolated allegations to attack Harford County Public Schools while simultaneously threatening to flat-fund our school system for the next four years. This is not a constructive discussion about public education. It is a political attack. It is a distraction. It is misleading. Constructive discussion would focus on solutions to the significant funding shortfall facing our schools. We must keep focus on the very challenges that will determine our ability to serve students in the years ahead.

Before submitting our budget request, this Board did its due diligence. We carefully reviewed expenditures and developed a responsible budget that balances the needs of students, employees, and taxpayers. We are grateful to the County Council for recognizing the importance of public education and providing an additional \$2.3 million in funding. Unfortunately, HCPS still faces an estimated \$12.5 million shortfall.

The people of Harford County deserve to understand what that means. Teacher salaries and employee compensation should not be on the chopping block. Our educators, support staff, bus drivers, custodians, and school employees have earned those commitments through their service to our students.

If adequate funding is not provided, the Board may be forced to consider difficult reductions affecting programs that families value and students depend upon, including high school athletics, Harford Glen, swimming pools, extracurricular activities, and other educational opportunities beyond the classroom.

The consequences of inadequate school funding will not be felt in political offices. They will be felt by students, parents, teachers, and families throughout Harford County. Our focus remains on where it belongs: protecting educational opportunities for children, honoring commitments to our employees, and

ensuring every student has the resources needed to succeed. As always, I remain hopeful that county leaders will work together through direct conversation and collaboration to address our shared challenges and best serve our students and community.

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