



HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM



**Board of Education Testimony
County Executive's Budget Hearing
Wednesday, December 2, 2015, 7 p.m.**

**Board of Education
of Howard County**

Janet Siddiqui, M.D.
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Vice Chairman

Bess Altwerger, Ed.D.

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Ellen Flynn Giles

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Rachel S. Lin
Student Member

Renee A. Foose, Ed.D.
*Superintendent
Secretary/Treasurer*

Good evening, Mr. Kittleman and members of the public. As Chairman of the Board of Education, I appreciate this opportunity to represent the Board and the school system, and to advocate for the county's 54,870 public school students.

A challenging economic climate does not lessen our commitment to our students and schools. We must strive to protect the gains we have made over the last several years, which have led our schools and students to achieve at their highest levels ever. At the same time, we must continue to make the strategic investments that give each Howard County child every opportunity to thrive. Our budget request fulfills our most critical mandate: to properly fund the programs and services that are essential to ensuring that all of our students achieve.

The school system continues its commitment to process improvement and cost containment including use of zero-based budgeting. These efforts have delivered significant improvements in operational efficiencies. Spending and staffing restrictions adopted during the prior fiscal year have continued during the current year. Every effort has been made to contain expenses while maintaining the standard of excellence that is synonymous with Howard County education.

Our budget includes funding to compensate the best teaching force in the state. Negotiated agreements signed this past summer and fall add salary costs not only to the current year, but the next year as well. Mandated increases in health and pension costs are anticipated to add significantly to the FY 2017 budget. Our system's high ranking directly reflects the work of our top-notch teachers and other staff. Sustaining our excellence requires that we provide a total compensation package commensurate with their skills and commitment to our students.

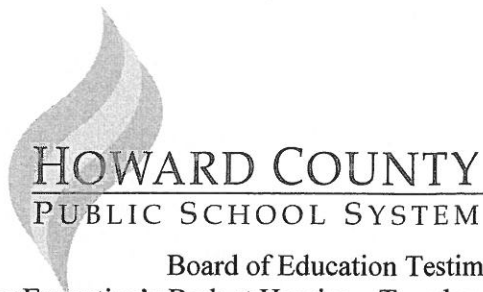
As the county welcomes new development, our system welcomes new students. The school system expects to enroll more than 1,100 new students next year, adding costs that are not included in Maintenance of Effort funding, which is based on prior year enrollment. As a growing county, the year over year impact of unfunded enrollment growth adds dramatically to the budget.

We are continuing to benefit from cost containment measures implemented in prior years. These include the early retirement program offered last year, which is expected to save a total of \$9.2 million over eight years. Our award winning wellness program, energy management program, and condition-based maintenance program remain sources of savings each year. We are currently implementing a new system to automate many business processes, which will deliver an expected return on investment of \$7.1 million over the next five years.

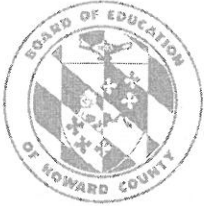
To address the system's capital needs, the Board of Education has given preliminary approval to an FY17 Capital Budget request of \$105.0 million. This request includes funding for the construction of a replacement school for Wilde Lake Middle School, renovations at Patuxent Valley and Oakland Mills middle schools, a renovation and addition at Swansfield Elementary, construction of new Elementary School #42, and funding and planning for a new High School #13.

I want to thank our county leaders for sharing our commitment to building a world class school system, and for recognizing the need to fund the cutting-edge educational programs that prepare students for the best opportunities. We are grateful for your support, and look forward to our continued collaboration in maintaining the quality education that our students deserve and our community expects.

Janet Siddiqui, M.D.
Chairman, Howard County Board of Education



Board of Education Testimony
County Executive's Budget Hearing - Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 7 p.m.



**Board of Education
of Howard County**

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Chairman

Ann De Lacy
Vice Chairman

Bess Altwerger, Ed.D.

Sandra H. French

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Cynthia L. Vaillancourt

Patrick B. Mikulis
Student Member

Renee A. Foose, Ed.D.
*Superintendent
Secretary/Treasurer*

Good evening, Mr. Kittleman. I am Janet Siddiqui, Chairman of the Board of Education of Howard County. On behalf of the members of the Board, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the FY16 Operating Budget Request we are submitting for your consideration.

The success of our public schools is closely linked to our county's prosperity. A large and growing proportion of our county's population face poverty and other challenges that interfere with learning and impede a child's prospects for lifelong success. Strategic investments in education will give every child an opportunity to thrive, and enhance the long term outlook for our entire county.

The Board of Education is mindful of the budgetary pressures that continue to impact our county and state governments. We are committed to fiscal responsibility to our community, while continuing to uphold the high standards that have earned Howard County a reputation for educational excellence that extends throughout our state and nation.

We anticipate the addition of 1,645 new students next year, adding significant costs that are not included in Maintenance of Effort funding, which is based on prior year enrollment. A mandated increase in health and pension costs, plus \$11.5 million for salary increases following the difficult FY15 negotiation process, add significantly to this budget request.

To offset these increases, we have proactively offered an early retirement program that is expected to deliver millions of dollars in savings over the next several years. We have also reallocated 84 existing positions to accommodate growing enrollment without a corresponding increase in student-teacher ratios, which are an important factor to student achievement. And while participation levels for our benefits plans continue to rise, our per-member claims cost is among the lowest in Maryland.

We continue to streamline operations so that the greatest possible proportion of our budget directly supports teaching and learning. We have positioned the system well financially over the past several years, and maintain one of the leanest operations among Maryland school systems.

The Board has further reduced the Superintendent's proposed Operating Budget by \$4.4 million through deferrals of building maintenance, prefunding contributions to the Employee Health, and reductions to the Workers' Compensation fund, office supplies, conference travel, and temporary wages.

The Board has also approved its FY16 Capital Budget request of \$89.6 million. This request includes funding to accommodate population along the Route 1 corridor and in downtown Columbia, and to renovate aging school facilities that urgently require upgrade. Funding is also included for a replacement Wilde Lake Middle School, which will be the first net-zero energy school in Maryland; a major renovation for Patuxent Valley Middle School; and renovation and addition projects at Swansfield and Waverly elementary schools.

I want to thank you for sharing our commitment to building a world class school system, and for recognizing the need to fund the cutting-edge educational programs that prepare students for the best opportunities. We are grateful for your support, and look forward to our continued collaboration in maintaining the quality education that our students deserve and our community expects.

Janet Siddiqui, M.D., Chairman, Board of Education of Howard County