

A Message from the Superintendent

Dear HCPSS Community,

This year's budget development process reflects a significant change in bringing forward a balanced budget. We have listened and responded to the feedback of our Board and County partners and are advancing budget work in January that has historically been done in May. It has been a tremendous lift with many difficult personnel decisions being made, but it will be particularly beneficial for Board members, the County Executive, and the County Council as we collectively weigh the choices of what can be done to navigate this difficult fiscal situation.



My Proposed FY 2025 Operating Budget totals \$1.13 billion, representing an increase of \$25.1 million, or 2.3% over the FY 2024 budget. Developing this budget began with a \$32.1 million deficit due largely to the use of one-time funds in last year's budget. This deficit is compounded by \$71.7 million dollars of increased expenditures necessary for mandates, commitments, and priorities. When combined, we have approximately a \$103.8 million gap that must be overcome to balance this budget.

My budget proposal recommends a combination of strategies to make up this gap including asking the County for the same \$47 million in above Maintenance of Effort funding the school system received last year, using the remaining \$10.2 million dollars of available fund balance, and making the difficult decision to reduce the budgets of existing non-mandated services by \$46.6 million.

We've heard from the State and the County about considering non-mandated requirements and programs and reallocating funds where possible. While difficult, we need to make significant changes now to put the school system on a more fiscally sustainable path as we continue to see mandated increases in years to come.

The information provided in this budget book provides greater detail about the proposed budget including impact statements about the budget reductions to foster understanding and clear choices about these reductions.

I appreciate and value the input, perspectives, ideas, and partnership of each member of the Board of Education, and I intend to be a strong partner through budget deliberations right to budget adoption. Additionally, I look forward to receiving the input of community members who come to testify during

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public hearings and continuing our conversations with our County partners and the County Executive. We are extremely fortunate to have so many advocates for education in Howard County and it will take all our collective efforts to overcome the challenge before us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William J. Barnes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "W".

William J. Barnes
Acting Superintendent