

# *A Message from the Board of Education*

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The Howard County Board of Education's FY 2026 Requested Operating Budget reflects a funding ask that captures the needs of the Howard County Public School System. While the Superintendent's proposed budget took great strides to meet many of the growing needs of the school system, the Board felt it was important to build on that proposal to address numerous priorities that, if not brought forward in its request, would be more difficult to fund later in the budget process without cutting other services.

Priorities added to the Board's request include: meeting special education staffing needs (ES); increasing funding for employee compensation; adding athletic trainer positions (HS); investing in Reading and Math instruction; expanding the Innovative Pathways Program; additional assistant principals (MS); restoring instructional team leader planning time (HS); bolstering staffing in Human Resources, the Legal Office and Print Services; replacing budget software; and one-time funding for improvements for security, replacement vehicles, water filtration, transportation software and other equipment.

The FY 2026 Board of Education's Requested Operating Budget totals \$1.257 billion, which is \$111.9 million, or a 9.77 percent increase over the FY 2025 Approved Operating Budget and adds 249.3 new full-time employees. The request for County recurring revenue funding totals \$868.0 million, which is \$107.0 million, or 14.06 percent over the FY 2025 budget. The Board is also requesting \$3.6 million in non-recurring funds for one-time costs. State revenues in the budget total \$370.4 million, an increase of \$18.6 million or 5.29 percent over the FY 2025 budget.

While the Board recognizes the County's fiscal capacity to fully fund the requested budget is unlikely, it is important for all stakeholders, and our County partners, to understand the gaps that persist between the priorities of the community and the funding available to the school system.

The Board appreciates the open lines of communication and collaboration between County Executive Calvin Ball, the Howard County Council, Superintendent Bill Barnes, and the Board of Education throughout every step of the budget development process and we look forward to continuing the conversations surrounding the school system budget to ensure the best possible outcome for our school system, our students, staff, and families.

Our work here is not done—it will continue through the spring with more work sessions, opportunities for stakeholder feedback, and deliberations as the budget process moves to the next stage. It is our goal to adopt an FY 2026 Operating Budget that offers our students and staff the greatest opportunities to be successful.

Sincerely,



Jolene Mosley  
Chair of the Board of Education