

# *A Message from the Board of Education*

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Howard County is widely recognized as one of the best places in the United States to live and raise a family. Much of that reputation is due to the exceptional education provided by the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and the dedication of our educators, staff, and families.

The Board of Education's requested FY 2027 Operating Budget reflects our commitment to sustaining the tradition of high-quality education in Howard County. This budget includes significant investments to meet the requirements of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and to better support our most vulnerable students. It prioritizes resources for our youngest learners, struggling readers, and students who require special education services. At the same time, the budget addresses essential operational costs such as student transportation and utilities. Through a thoughtful and measured approach, the budget makes targeted strategic investments aligned with the goals of the HCPSS strategic plan. Most importantly, it prioritizes our teachers and staff by supporting increases in employee compensation and benefits.

The Superintendent's proposed budget served as the foundation for the Board's deliberations. Building on that proposal, the Board worked to address critical needs while keeping the total funding request to the County largely unchanged.

The Board's requested budget reflects not only our priorities but also our commitment to listening to the voices of the community. Thousands of students, teachers, staff members, and parents submitted testimony about the programs and services that matter most to them. While we could not fully fund every program or staffing need, the Board made decisions with a strong focus on supporting our students in need, while remaining fiscally responsible during a time of financial uncertainty.

The Board's requested FY 2027 Operating Budget increases by \$68.7 million to a total of \$1.29 billion, representing a 5.7 percent increase over the previous year. The budget includes \$52.4 million to support employee compensation and benefits, \$12.2 million for existing service commitments, and \$6.8 million for system priorities. These increases are partially offset by the removal of \$1.3 million in one-time funding from last year and \$1.3 million in base budget reductions. Overall, the budget results in a net increase of 94 positions.

Developing this fiscally responsible budget required careful deliberation and difficult decisions, ultimately requesting a reasonable level of new revenue from the County. The Board's request asks the County to provide \$63.2 million in new funding to support ongoing services, for a total County contribution of \$877.7 million—a 7.6 percent increase over FY 2026. State funding, which is determined by formula, is projected to total \$393.3 million, representing a 4.6 percent increase from the previous year.

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This year, the Board's requested budget is also being published as an Executive Summary Budget Book, a condensed version of the information typically provided in the full budget document. This change represents a cost-effective approach by eliminating the need to print a full-budget book of more than 700 pages. All detailed financial information on programs that would normally appear in the full budget book will still be available online through the budget toolkit.

Work on the FY 2027 Operating Budget will continue throughout the spring. Additional work sessions, stakeholder feedback opportunities, and deliberations will take place following our economic analysis. We look forward to continued collaboration with Calvin Ball and members of the County Council to achieve the best possible outcome for our school system. When the Board adopts the FY 2027 Operating Budget in May, it will reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting the success of our students, educators, staff, and families.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Swickard Mallo  
Chair of the Board of Education