



Prepared Testimony
Maryland Board of Public Works

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Michael J. Martirano, Ed.D.

Interim Superintendent

Howard County Public School System

Good afternoon Governor Hogan, Comptroller Franchot and Treasurer Kopp. I am Michael Martirano, Interim Superintendent of Schools for the Howard County Public School System and I am joined by our Board of Education Chairman Cindy Vaillancourt and Board members Kirsten Coombs and Sandra French. I am also pleased to have County Executive Allan Kittleman, as well as County Council Chair Jon Weinstein and members Calvin Ball and Jen Terrasa here. From Howard County's state delegation, Delegates Bob Flanagan and Vanessa Atterbeary are also here.

It is a new day in Howard County. We are working hard to improve communications with our stakeholders, and are fostering collaboration and supporting creativity. I have taken swift action to re-establish a more productive, collaborative partnership with parents and community leaders, and a positive working relationship with our County and State Government leaders. These relationships lay the groundwork for further progress in our mutual goal of regaining public trust.

Communication and Collaboration

We have addressed head-on several chronic issues that have interfered with our system's progress and challenged our relationships with stakeholders. We are placing the highest premium on openness and transparency, by actively responding to questions, input and feedback from all stakeholders. We recently launched an online MPIA tracking system to make public requests and responsive documents readily accessible to the community. I have initiated a forensic audit to examine our budget practices over the past several years, and we are taking a close look at our chronic health care fund deficit, to determine underlying causes and long-term solutions.

Indoor Environmental Quality

We have diligently responded to community concerns about mold with a robust program to ensure Indoor Environmental Quality, using best practices that were commended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). We appreciate the restoration of \$9.6 million in state funding, and have put it to good use in making essential upgrades to school heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems at Pointers Run and Rockburn elementary schools and Burleigh Manor and Mount View middle schools.

We are committed to environmental sustainability and our Public School Construction Program (PSCP) maintenance inspection scores have averaged 91.5 percent score over the last seven years.

Growing Enrollment

Howard County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. HCPSS enrollment has grown steadily for several decades, and has increased by approximately 1,000 students in each of the last several years. Our current enrollment is over 56,800 students, which is over 1,000 more students than last year, and we expect to welcome more than 1,000 additional students next year. By 2026, our enrollment is expected to have increased by over 9,000 students.

Rapid growth brings pressure for additional school capacity, especially in the northeastern portion of our county where growth is most intense. Today, nearly one-quarter of our schools (17 of 73, or 23.3 percent) are significantly overcrowded, with enrollment exceeding 110 percent of target utilization levels.

New Schools

Addressing school overcrowding is an issue of equity, in giving all students full access to high quality educational programs and services. Our productive relationship with Howard County Executive Kittleman and the County Council has allowed us to secure enough funds to build a long-overdue replacement school for Talbott Springs Elementary, We will also open a new elementary school in the northeast region next year, and an additional elementary school is slated to open in 2023.

At the High School level, we project a deficit of 2,362 seats by 2022 with that number increasing to 2,686 in 2024. Our revised capital budget request includes the acceleration by two years of a much needed, long overdue 13th high school in 2022. This advancement and acceleration is a collective priority for myself, our Board of Education, the County Executive, County Council and our state delegation.

The new High School is estimated to cost \$124,000,000 with a total state request of \$49,600,000 over three years. For FY2019 we are not requesting any funding towards school construction but are seeking local planning permission.

Redistricting & Innovative Approaches

A broad scale redistricting would be required to shift students from overcrowded schools concentrated in the northern and eastern portions of the county, to schools with unused capacity, many in the western county area. Fully realigning attendance areas to alleviate overcrowding would require redistricting nearly 9,000 students and cause significant community disruption. However, the one-trick pony of redistricting cannot solve this problem for the long-term. Considering the County's commitment to accelerate the 13th High School and projected growth, I have recommended delaying high school redistricting until 2022, when we can take a more comprehensive approach to address overcrowding more fully. This will also help us put in place a solution that prepares our school system for the projected growth.

I have proposed, and the Board is currently reviewing, an alternative, innovative approach to relieve school overcrowding that limits redistricting while adding high-quality educational

programming. We plan to add educational program offerings in underutilized facilities, and open those schools for optional enrollment to students in overcrowded schools. The new offerings will represent attractive opportunities that will be of interest to many students and families, who will choose to change schools in order to take advantage of the special programs.

We hope to add and expand early college/dual enrollment programs at two high schools, which will be opened for enrollment by students at three other high schools where enrollment exceeds capacity. Our existing early college programs have been very successful in giving high school students a head start on college at a minimal cost. They are especially valuable to families of limited financial means. I have provided four recommendations to the Board of Education to consider as they are making their final redistricting plan. It will be the fifth and final plan but we must do something as we address our overcrowding.

Schools as Community Centers

Howard County school facilities serve as resources used by the entire community. Each year, in addition to educational use, our facilities are used more than 230,000 times for community events. We are collaborating with Howard County Recreation and Parks to repurpose community use spaces in our schools into educational delivery spaces.

We have faced a year-after-year cycle of postponing systemic and capital needs due to funding challenges. We are cognizant of the budgetary pressures at the county and state levels, and are committed to good stewardship of public funding. The equitable delivery of a high quality educational program to all students will always be our priority, and we consistently seek innovative approaches to improving educational programs, services and outcomes within available funding.

I am grateful for the cooperation of the Board of Public Works and the ongoing partnership of our state and county government leaders. We look forward to working with you, as we have in the past, so that we may become a premier education system that every Howard County child deserves.

Michael J. Martirano
Interim Superintendent