

Superintendent's Remarks

Presentation of the 2019 Feasibility Study

Date: June 13, 2019

Tonight marks the beginning of the public boundary review process that was directed by the Board on January 24, 2019. You just received a presentation by Cooperative Strategies, LLC confirming that the projections used to develop the Feasibility Study are within 99% accuracy countywide. It is critical that the Board and the Howard County community trusts the data being used for the study, which is why we proactively sought this independent verification. Cooperative Strategies will continue to have an important role in this process as they lead community input opportunities and provide me with guidance as I prepare my recommendations.

2017 Process

Two years ago, we began a boundary review process with what I called the “scorched-earth” approach. This approach would have put every school within target utilization, redrawing all of the attendance areas, and resulting in approximately 8,800 students being moved. Ultimately, the Board moved 2,200 students in order to open Hanover Hills Elementary School and fix multiple middle school feeds.

Enhanced Communication & Engagement

I recognize that this process invokes a great deal of emotion in our community and we are greatly amplifying our communication and engagement so parents and families are informed, know the process, and know that their voice is being heard and considered. Our boundary review website is robust with information, resources, frequently asked questions, and input opportunities. Updates will be made regularly and we will err on the side of over-communicating throughout this process.

Attendance Area Committee (AAC)

Per HCPSS Policy 6010, I have appointed individuals to the Attendance Area Committee, or AAC, who represent every planning region in the County, and each has previously served HCPSS in advisory roles, as a member of an advisory committee, or partner community organization. Group members include a former HCPSS administrator and a current student. Two individuals were tapped from one of the last three AACs to provide historical perspective. This group will review the feasibility

study and provide feedback directly to me to inform my recommendations. It is important to note that per policy, it is not the AAC's role to develop their own plan or receive public input.

Civility

While ensuring far greater communications this year from my staff, I have also provided very clear expectations publicly that this review be conducted with a level of civility, respect, empathy and careful listening that we as adults must model for our children. I was saddened when I heard that Board members, staff members, members of the AAC and community members were harassed, bullied and threatened in 2017. This is not acceptable behavior, especially in Howard County.

2019 Feasibility Study

The Feasibility Study that is about to be presented is the starting point for a process scheduled to conclude with the Board's decision on November 21. It is a resource for the Board, the community and for me to use as we begin our work. Members of my staff have set aside time to meet with Board members over the next several days and I encourage you to take advantage of those opportunities.

At this point, I will turn this presentation over to Anissa Brown Dennis, Chief Operating Officer.