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Councilmembers Ball and Terrasa Seek Performance Audit of HCPSS through the Maryland State Department of Education

Ellicott City, MD (October 31, 2016) – Howard County Council Chairman Calvin Ball and Councilwoman Jen Terrasa filed legislation calling on the Maryland State Department of Education to contract for a performance audit of the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS). The Councilmembers believe that an assessment of the practices of the Howard County Public School System is needed to determine whether the School System is operating economically and efficiently and to determine whether corrective actions for improving its performance are appropriate.

The performance audit would study the following issues:

- legal fees and use of outside legal counsel;
- the procurement process; and
- special education staffing and services, including out of school placement.

“We have an extraordinary school system, but these ongoing issues are very problematic,” said Dr. Ball. “The County Auditor’s financial audit limits us on addressing ongoing issues with the school system. My hope is that we can move forward in a transparent way, get the answers we need, and use this opportunity to regain the trust of our community.”

Pursuant to State law, Section 5-110 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code provides that the County governing body may request that the Maryland State Department of Education contract for a performance audit of the county public school system.

The County Auditor is currently conducting a financial audit of the School System as a result of Council Resolution 88-2016, however, it does not authorize him to evaluate the School System’s internal controls and the efficiency and effectiveness of its procedures and processes, which is the premise of a performance audit.

“The financial audit by law cannot address concerns that have been raised by the citizens of Howard County, including parents of special education students,” said Terrasa. “This is especially important in light of the results of recent audits and people wanting to know if their taxes are being spent appropriately and competently.”

The proposed legislation will be introduced at the Council’s legislative session on November 7, 2016. Testimony will be accepted at the Council’s regular legislative public hearing on November 21, 2016 at 7:00 pm. To sign up to testify, visit <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/otestimony/>. If you would like to submit your testimony electronically, email councilmail@howardcountymd.gov.

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