



Howard County Council

George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

COUNCILMEMBERS

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Jon Weinstein, Vice Chairperson
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District 2
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District 3
Greg Fox
District 5

November 30, 2015

The Honorable Larry Hogan
Maryland State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

Improving economic trends are leading to a significant budget surplus for Maryland in this fiscal year. Although there are many pressing needs and worthy ways to use the surplus, our considered opinion is that some of this surplus should be used to restore the funding that the General Assembly had allocated to school systems under the Geographic Cost of Education Index.

Given the clear benefits of a top-tier education for the long term health of the State, the surplus funds should be used to ensure that our children get the best education possible. This worthy goal is both a prudent investment in our collective future and a priority of our citizenry. According to a recent Washington Post-University of Maryland poll¹, significantly more residents want education to be our top priority compared with those giving priority to the economy, taxes, or other issues.

Here in Howard County, the school system is struggling to keep up with growing enrollment and increasing demand for services for special needs students and also working hard to close the achievement gap. Withholding money already approved for Howard County disproportionately hurts minority and special needs students. Recent disappointing PARCC test results² suggest that more resources are needed. Furthermore, State funding is essential to keep pace with development and the escalating costs of construction. Additional State funding may allow the school system to undertake renovations and maintenance that were deferred due to budget constraints.

Additional State funding would also allow the County to move forward with needed improvements to teacher compensation. According to the State Department of Education, new teachers and teachers nearing retirement, which make up over 40% of the teacher population, are the groups containing those most likely to leave teaching. Providing competitive compensation is key to retaining great teachers and attracting the most capable new teachers. Limited progress in these areas has led to difficulty in recruitment, particularly in certain critical content areas.

Marylanders want our public schools to be the best, and your leadership is needed to make this happen.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mary Kay Sigaty in blue ink.

Mary Kay Sigaty, Chairperson

Handwritten signature of Jon Weinstein in blue ink.

Jon Weinstein, Vice Chairperson

Handwritten signature of Calvin Ball in blue ink.

Calvin Ball, Council Member

Handwritten signature of Jennifer R. Terrasa in blue ink.

Jennifer Terrasa, Council Member

¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/polling/gov-hogan-direction-state-maryland/2015/10/15/457b99a0-7323-11e5-ba14-318f8e87a2fc_page.html

² <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/education/bs-md-parcc-scores-high-school-20151105-story.html>