
From: Montè Schwarzwälder <monteleoneschwarzwalder@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 2, 2025 9:53 AM
To: CouncilMail; Eatough, Christopher
Subject: Re: "Howard officials question \$100,000 bus routes for kids 0.3 miles away"

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Council members

What it's like to get hit by a car and why just putting in crosswalks with bump outs and an island in the middle of the road isn't enough (and is actually dangerous in some instances). We need to do more:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/DPowwU8Erwl/>

Fortunately when I was hit by a car in a crosswalk we were both going about 5 mph. Even then, there is 10 seconds of my life that I have no recall. Only the feeling of being involuntarily lifted off the ground on my right side and waking up on the other side of the car with a bloody skull.

Please read what I have said in my previous email.

Thank you,
Monte Schwarzwälder,
Columbia MD

On Tue, Oct 28, 2025 at 12:57 PM Montè Schwarzwälder <monteleoneschwarzwalder@gmail.com> wrote:

Greetings Council Members, Crhis,

I am a bicyclist who has commuted to work using Martin Road many times. When I read that Martin Road was a 'hazard bus' route, I recalled an incident while going to work one morning. I was stopped at Audubon to turn right on to Martin on my bike. From my left a Volkswagen Golf was headed south on Martin at a high rate of speed. My facial expression, expressing utter disdain, was seen by the driver, who decided the mature thing to do was flip me the bird through his sunroof.

The point is, there is a huge problem with drivers who have no regard for human life. I do not believe the solution is painting crosswalks in the street, even patrolled by crossing guards. I also do not believe the solution is road constrictions that narrow the road, but make the road more dangerous for bicyclists (note the death of tragic Summer Lim in Montgomery County last month, which I believe could be partially attributed to road constricting) and arguably for pedestrians (i.e. the pedestrians are essentially IN the roadway while waiting to cross).

As a person who was struck by an automobile in a crosswalk as a pedestrian (@ Ft Meade), I think I speak from experience on this matter.

The solution is three-fold:

- 1) Treat pedestrians with the same respect as the most dangerous users of the road, namely automobiles. That means installing stop lights at pedestrian crosswalks. Drivers won't like it, but life is more valuable than getting to work 2 minutes sooner.
- 2) Educate pedestrians and drivers to make eye contact with one another before entering a crosswalks.
- 3) ***Enforce the law on automobile window tinting*** so pedestrians ***can actually make eye contact with drivers and vice versa.***

Installing pedestrian stop lights would be expensive and upset drivers but it would save lives. Many jurisdictions have already implemented pedestrian stop lights. It's high time we valued human life as much as we value automobiles.

Sincerely,

Monte Schwarzwaldner,
5063 Blacksmith Dr.
Columbia, MD

From: Nil Gosai <neal_6655@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 20, 2026 8:16 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Overcrowding our schools Maple Lawn West

Follow Up Flag: Flag for follow up
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Good day sir/ma'am,

Please consider our overcrowded schools, Fulton Elementary cannot keep up with the current influx of students enrolling this school year, how are they going to survive with hundreds more. Lime Kiln MS had the highest student enrollment for 6th graders in the school history.

Adding hundreds of units from the Maple Lawn West proposal is going to destroy the safety and well being of our students. Even with today's current levels we have had several car accidents and near misses on school property. I completely understand we need to develop and growth the local community but not like this, not by flooding the area.

Thank you

From: Erwin Romero <romero.erwinh@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 11:40 PM
To: Budget Testimony; Ball, Calvin
Cc: CouncilMail
Subject: Support Full Funding for HCPSS in FY2027 Budget

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Dear County Executive Dr. Ball and County Council Members,

I am writing as a parent to urge you to fully fund the Howard County Public School System in the FY2027 Operating Budget and to support the Board of Education's approved budget.

Our students have already experienced increased class sizes and program reductions in recent years. As music parents, we saw the elimination of the third-grade strings program in FY2026 — a loss that reduced early access to music education for many students across the county.

The Board of Education has worked thoughtfully to approve a budget that avoids additional cuts to student programs. Any reduction to that request would directly impact classroom experiences, staffing, and opportunities for students.

Howard County families value strong public schools and well-rounded educational opportunities — including music and the arts — that support student growth, engagement, and achievement.

I respectfully ask that you fully fund the HCPSS request and continue investing in the students, educators, and programs that make our school system strong.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erwin Romero

1152 Day Road,

Sykesville MD, 21784

From: Joanna Ramos-Romero <jramosromero0409@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 17, 2026 11:26 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; Budget Testimony
Cc: CouncilMail
Subject: Support Full Funding for HCPSS in FY2027 Budget

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Dear County Executive Dr. Ball and County Council Members,

I am writing as a parent to urge you to fully fund the Howard County Public School System in the FY2027 Operating Budget and to support the Board of Education's approved budget.

Our students have already experienced increased class sizes and program reductions in recent years. As music parents, we saw the elimination of the third-grade strings program in FY2026 — a loss that reduced early access to music education for many students across the county and was particularly concerning to us, as we saw how much our daughter enjoyed learning the cello when she was in third grade.

The Board of Education has worked thoughtfully to approve a budget that avoids additional cuts to student programs. Any reduction to that request would directly impact classroom experiences, staffing, and opportunities for students.

Howard County families value strong public schools and well-rounded educational opportunities — including music and the arts — that support student growth, engagement, and achievement. I have witnessed this first-hand with both of my daughters. My older daughter was in MRHS chamber choir all four years and is now studying engineering at Cornell University. My younger daughter is a junior at MRHS, and her participation in chamber choir and dance company have been integral to her development and has inspired her to pursue the arts in college and beyond.

I respectfully ask that you fully fund the HCPSS request and continue investing in the students, educators, and programs that make our school system strong.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joanna Ramos-Romero

1152 Day Rd.
Sykesville, MD 21784

From: Anthony DeBella <jhu1996@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 12, 2026 11:52 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; CouncilMail
Subject: County Council Budget Testimony-
Attachments: InvIncomeSpokenTestimony.docx; InvestmentIncomeWithDetails.docx

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Budget testimony in favor of full funding for HCPSS Capital and Operating Budget, supported by more complete utilization of General Fund Investment Income. Surpluses in investment income can provide an additional \$10M of current year revenue.

Justification exceeds the limits of 3 minute spoken testimony, so the more detailed version of the testimony showing breakdown of potential revenue is included as "with details" version for your consideration.

Very respectfully,
Anthony DeBella

Howard County Investment Income can provide an additional \$10M of FY27 Funds for HCPSS

During formulation of the HCPSS Budget for FY26, our County Executive encouraged use of all available funds on hand. In developing the FY27 Howard County Capital and Operating Budgets, I urge our County Executive to extend that philosophy to make full use of the Howard County General Fund Investment Income generated by the county funds during the course of the year to support HCPSS.

Investment Income is current year general fund revenue, like property and income taxes, and in FY24 and FY25, has generated surpluses of \$25M and \$30M respectively. Howard County's latest Investment Report (dated February 28, 2026) shows that General Fund Investment Income is on track for another significant surplus in FY26, as much as \$13.5M beyond the budgeted \$22.5M. Further, the overall investment fund balance is running \$100M above budgeted levels for FY26 pointing to another year of budget surpluses.

Based on the predictability of returns of the long term investment securities held in the General Fund (totaling \$1 Billion), and prevailing interest rates (3.5% – 4%), it can be predicted that in FY 27 Investment Income will generate an additional \$10M of current year revenue above the FY26 levels, which can be used to fund a significant portion of the new funds included in the FY27 HCPSS Operating Budget Request. These funds are outside the revenue estimates referenced in the County Executive's letter to HCPSS of February 23, 2026, and would serve to offset the one-time funding from surplus used in FY26.

Prudent financial management is a hallmark of good government, and all stakeholders understand the uncertainty of the current fiscal situation. Standard contingency lines in the county operating budget are routinely included to manage that uncertainty, and the County Budget Stabilization Fund (Rainy Day Fund) remains intact. Generating further surpluses needlessly withholds available resources from the operating budget.

Therefore, I recommend the County Executive allocate investment income up to \$34M and full funding of the FY27 HCPSS Capital and Operating Budgets in order to maintain the quality education that has long distinguished Howard County Public Schools. Full use of investment income as current year revenue will harness the power of the same inflationary forces driving up interest rates to address the modest cost of living adjustments behind a large portion of the funding increase requested by HCPSS.

Anthony DeBella
April 13, 2026

Testimony on Revenue for FY27 Capital and Operating Budget

Investment Income can Provide Additional \$10M for HCPSS

Anthony DeBella, April 13, 2026

During formulation of the HCPSS Operating Budget for FY26, our County Executive encouraged use of all available funds on hand. In developing the FY27 Howard County Operating Budget, this letter urges our County Executive to extend that philosophy to make full use of the investment income generated by the county funds during the course of the year.

Investment income is considered regular operating revenue, like property and income tax revenue, and is available for funding HCPSS and other county operating expenses.

In recent years, interest rates rose along with inflation, and investment income evolved to provide a significant and predictable source of county revenue. FY24 and FY25 Operating Budgets did not fully account for this income, resulting in significant surpluses that could have been used to offset significant staffing reductions in HCPSS. This year's Spending Affordability Advisory Committee Report likewise did not account for additional investment income for FY27 over the budgeted \$22M from FY26, despite the accrual of significant surpluses within this revenue stream even as the SAAC was making their revenue projection. General Fund investment income through February 28 has reached \$24M, already exceeding the FY26 budgeted \$22.5M, and on track to reach over \$36M for the year (a \$12M surplus).

During the course of the fiscal year, Howard County manages \$1 Billion within the General Fund at any one time. The most recent county Investment Report, dated February 28, 2026, illustrates how the balance of all funds rises and falls as tax receipts come in, and monthly expenses are paid out. Other details about the investment holdings can be used to make a reasonable estimate of the investment income for FY27.

Year	Budgeted Income	Realized Income	Surplus
FY24	\$4M	\$29M	\$25M
FY25	\$10M	\$40.1M	\$30M
FY26	\$22.5M	\$36M (projected)	\$13.5 (projected)
FY27	\$23M (SAAC Report)	\$34M (estimated)	\$11M (estimated)

During the year, county funds are used to purchase bonds and other investments to securely hold the funds, and generate a financial return until the funds are needed. Some funds are needed within the year, and those funds are placed in Money Market accounts yielding prevailing interest rates, currently around 3.7%. Other funds for future expenses are invested in various government bonds maturing in FY27-FY31 and generating interest at roughly 4%.

Prevailing interest rates fluctuate based on Federal Reserve Bank interest rate policy, and have been reduced slightly during this FY. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect less investment income during FY27. However, funds invested in bonds maturing in FY27 and later will continue to pay their locked in coupon interest rate. Holdings listed in the most recent report do not differentiate which county fund hold which bonds, but because long term holdings of \$700M exceed the total of all other funds, at least \$256M of General Fund money must be invested in these bonds which will pay a predictable average of 4% independent of rate fluctuations¹. That portion of the general fund can be expected to generate \$10.2M in FY27.

Assuming the General Fund will have the rest of the \$1B invested in money market funds, that \$744M will generate interest at the prevailing rate. The current prevailing rate is 3.7%, but for the sake of making prudent conservative revenue estimates, assume the rate decreases by 0.5% to 3.2% the day after the fiscal year starts. The interest generated is estimated to be \$23.8M ($\$744M \times 0.032$). Therefore, a reasonable estimate of investment income accruing in the General Fund is the total of the two, or \$34M, well above the \$22.5M budgeted for FY26. This increase of at least \$10M in revenue available for FY27 can be used to offset the additional cost growth for HCSS, and represents a significant amount of the gap cited by HCPSS in their response to the County Executive's letter of February 23, 2026, and offsets most of the use of one-time funding for FY26.

Prudent financial management is a hallmark of good government, and all stakeholders understand the uncertainty of the current fiscal situation. Standard contingency lines in the county operating budget are routinely included to manage that risk, and the County Rainy Day fund remains intact. Generating excessive surpluses withholds available resources from the operating budget. The February 28, 2026 investment report shows that the total investment balance running at least \$100M higher than expected at this point in the FY, indicating that the county is again running a significant surplus, and less use of prior years funds will be required to implement the FY26 budget. These surpluses are accruing while HCPSS has lost over 100 staff each of the past 2 years, increasing class sizes and degrading the academic programs that distinguish HCPSS from neighboring counties, and spur housing demand that supports ever rising property values, and attract incomes necessary to support that housing. Full use of investment income as operating revenue will harness the power of the inflationary forces driving up interest rates to address the modest cost of living adjustments behind a large portion of the funding increase requested by HCPSS.

Anthony DeBella
Laurel, MD 20723

¹ A note about call risk. Bonds held by Howard County will yield the coupon rate until maturity, unless called and repaid. That would decrease returns somewhat, but current prevailing rates are not significantly lower than coupon rates and the money could be reinvested. Potential decreases to investment income are about \$2M ($\$256M \times 0.8\%$).

From: Linfeng Chen <Linfeng_Chen@hcpss.org>
Sent: Monday, April 13, 2026 6:38 PM
To: CouncilMail
Cc: Board & Student Member; Bill Barnes
Subject: Testimony from HCPSS Board Of Education

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Good evening esteemed members of the County Council. My name is Dr. Linfeng Chen, and I am a member of the Howard County Board of Education. Thank you for the opportunity to address the County Council on this important matter.

The improvements, updates, upgrades, and new construction funded through the capital budget are essential to maintaining safe, effective teaching and learning environments across our district. With more than 80 school and office buildings - most built before 1980 - many of our facilities require significant investment, from replacing aging air handlers to undertaking major renovations, and everything in between.

The Board of Education regularly hears from students, educators, and families who speak passionately and often urgently about the needs in their schools. They are right. The needs are real, and they are widespread. While the Board agrees with the concerns raised, we are faced each year with the difficult task of prioritizing projects within limited funding. These are challenging decisions because every need matters.

On March 26, County Executive Ball announced full funding of the Board of Education's requested \$98 million capital budget. On behalf of the Board, I want to express our sincere gratitude for this historic investment in our school facilities. This commitment will support critical upgrades, renovations, and repairs that will benefit students and communities throughout Howard County.

I respectfully urge the County Council to adopt the County Executive's proposed capital budget and advance this vital investment in our schools.

While both the operating and capital budget processes can bring uncertainty, Howard County continues to distinguish itself through a strong, collaborative approach, bringing together elected officials, community members, families, and educators in support of our shared priority: student success. I want to thank the County Council and the County Executive for your ongoing partnership. Your commitment is a key reason Howard County remains one of the best places in Maryland to raise a family.

Thank you again for your leadership and your continued partnership in serving our students.

Linfeng Chen

From: Ted Gifford <tedfordgif@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 12, 2026 8:03 PM
To: Ball, Calvin; Budget Testimony
Cc: CouncilMail
Subject: Support Full Funding for HCPSS in FY2027 Budget

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Dear County Executive Dr. Ball and County Council Members,

I am writing as a parent of two current and two former students to urge you to fully fund the Howard County Public School System in the FY2027 Operating Budget and to support the Board of Education's approved budget.

Our students have already experienced increased class sizes and program reductions in recent years. As music parents, we saw the elimination of the third-grade strings program in FY2026 — a loss that reduced early access to music education for many students across the county. We were lucky to have our final child participate in 3rd grade strings, and want others to have the same opportunities we had for our children.

The Board of Education has worked thoughtfully to approve a budget that avoids additional cuts to student programs. Any reduction to that request would directly impact classroom experiences, staffing, and opportunities for students.

Howard County families value strong public schools and well-rounded educational opportunities — including music and the arts — that support student growth, engagement, and achievement.

I respectfully ask that you fully fund the HCPSS request and continue investing in the students, educators, and programs that make our school system strong.

Thank you for your service and your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ted Gifford

5212 Harvey Ln, Ellicott City, MD 21043

IES - 4th grader

BBMS - 7th grader

as well as 2 PLES-BBMS-HoHS grads

From: Jimara Kocik <jimarak26@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2026 1:26 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Budget Testimony Howard County/Jimara Kocik
Attachments: Testimony Budget Howard County-2.pdf

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Good Afternoon

I submit my testimony to the Council in Howard County.

Thank you for consideration to read it.

Jimara kocik

Good Afternoon,

Member of the County Council in Howard County.

I am writing to you as a member of the community to submit my testimony and concerns about the community in Howard.

I am a mom of three children attending Howard school system and I am concerned about one of my sons' schools because of the issues happening there.

The condition of the Lake Elkhorn Middle School building negatively impacts students academic performance, behavioral health needs, attendance, and equitable opportunities.

The school building needs immediate attention, aggressive measures, and an expedited timeline to repair and address maintenance critical to the function of the school.

The lack of maintenance and dirty conditions negatively impact the school environment by making it feel neglected and unwelcoming.

When students and staff are in a space that is not clean or well-kept, it can affect their sense of pride, focus, and motivation.

The Lake Elkhorn Middle School building demonstrates an inequitable learning environment with areas in need of urgent attention to repair and replace including:

- Lack of access to educational technology like ceiling mounted projectors and functional screens
- 26 core content area classrooms with broken classroom furniture
- Bathrooms smell and appear dirty even when cleaned
- Damaged floors, 35 classrooms with tile floors have floors which are cracked, missing tiles and stained. Additionally the gym floor is uneven wax stripped and patchy.
- 37 classrooms with peeling paint and damaged walls. Notice that this school has a large student capacity.

Also, I want to ask the council to do more training to the Howard County Police with latest incident with a member with autism in the community was killed when he request help for a mental health crisis, we are afraid to call 911 and ask for services for our children and young with autism, it is urgent need to attend our concern and to prevent similar incident happens in near future.

Additionally I want to mention the increasing mental health struggles with teens and the low response for the school system to offer assistance. There is an urgent need for staff, counselors and psychologists at school and a program of well being to support during the school year.

Jimara kocik

Advocacy Member of the community

