

The People's Voice, LLC

Ethics Ballot TM

3205 B Corporate Court Ellicott City, MD 21042

2018 Howard County Questionnaire Board of Education Candidates

1. Why are you running for this office? What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office?

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The last few years have taught me a couple of things. Civility matters. Knowledge matters. Listening matters. I am running so that as a member of the Board of Education, I can continue my work in the school system building community participation, listening to community voices, and advocating for all students with an emphasis on the underrepresented. I can bring my experience, knowledge, ability to listen, and civility into the Board room. I will do my homework and come prepared to fight for all students.

When the new Board Members are seated in December, all seven Board Members will be first term board members. This means that we need to elect people who know and have been deeply involved in the county and school system. We need to elect people who have worked in individual schools as well as on system wide initiatives. We need to elect people who have already worked to build community participation and improve the channels of communication between the school system and the community. We need people who have solid working relationships with the superintendent, his staff, and with teachers.

I have been working in education advocacy for more than 20 years. Most recently, I served for two years as the chairperson of the Community Advisory Council and vice chairperson for two years. This allowed me to see a big picture view, to analyze, and to participate in Howard County education at a system level. During this time I participated on five policy review committees and one system-wide initiative.

On a more local level, at Swansfield Elementary, Harper's Choice Middle, and Wilde Lake High Schools, I have served as a PTA President, Secretary, Cultural Arts Chairperson, Science Fair Coordinator, Reading Room Coordinator, Orchestra Support Person, (and more) as well as classroom volunteer. I have been in the schools and in the classrooms, making a positive impact both large and small. I have made long lasting relationships with teachers and staff, built collaborative work environments, and worked to achieve consensus and build teams of collaborators.

Additionally, as a trained analyst with an economics degree, I can provide a level of analysis and accountability needed on the Board of Education.

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I understand how to sift through the nitty-gritty financial details to see the bigger pictures and find problems when they exist.

Finally, as a parent of older children, I bring patience, flexibility, and a sense of humor when dealing with new problems, situations, and unexpected events.

2. Describe why you feel you have a viable campaign.

I have a viable campaign because I am a viable candidate. I have experience and have done my homework. As the former Chairperson of the HCPSS Community Advisory Council, I have built strong relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders. I have worked collaboratively with Boards of Education, administrators, and educators on everything ranging from the Indoor Environmental Quality Initiative to policy committees on redistricting, field trips, school publications and performances, and more.

I have the time and energy to devote to a robust campaign where nearly every day I am out listening to constituent concerns, learning more about our school system, and preparing to lead as a member of the Board.

I have made collaborative, strong working relationships with parents, volunteers, and educators from my time in PTA and Boosters leadership at Swansfield ES, Harper's Choice MS, and Wilde Lake HS. I have outreach from my time as President of East Columbia Preschool, of Parents AT Home in Howard County, and of MOMS Club of Columbia. I have voter networks from my time as a parent of kids playing soccer, playing tennis, swimming, wrestling, and competitively rock climbing.

I have met with multiple current and former Board members and have their support as they see me as a voice of reason, deliberation, and civility.

3. How do you believe one eliminates the appearance of conflicts regarding campaign contributions?

In the Maryland General Assembly, conflicts on interest are defined as "An interest of a member of the General Assembly conflicts with the public interest if the legislator's interest tends to impair the legislator's independence of judgment." MD General Provisions § 5-512.

If I apply those constraints to campaign contributions, then the best course of action and what I will adhere to is to limit the size of the donations accepted so that no one single party has undue influence or greater impact. Another way to reduce the appearance of conflicts of interest is to have full disclosure of all campaign donations thereby increasing transparency and visibility into who is supporting whom. I also believe that one can refuse to accept campaign contributions from special interest groups that are inconsistent with one's ethical compass.

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4. If you are elected, what are your top priorities for 2019? Discuss at least three areas of concern for The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and how you would address them.

Fiscal Responsibility: We need to craft a multi-year strategic plan and associated budgets to get the school system out of debt and into a financially sound state with accountability and transparency. This is explained in great detail in question #6.

Teacher Empowerment: We need to reduce the bureaucratic and non-teaching demands on our excellent teachers and allow them to do what they do best: TEACH.

Equity: We need to evaluate our practices and our data to look for places of inequity and then take measurable, tangible steps to remedy the situation. I will continue to advocate that the school system look for opportunities to increase access to challenging courses for all students. I will continue to advocate for schools to have resources proportional to their needs to deliver effective instruction. I will continue to advocate that discipline be evaluated to determine if there is bias and what can be done to remediate it. I will continue to advocate for LGBTQ+ students to be treated with dignity and respect and to receive a good education.

Special Education: We need to evaluate and adhere to best practices to deliver effective and efficient special education services for all students who need them. We need to develop an infrastructure to better support and inform our families throughout the special education process.

Safety: We need to take action to secure our school buildings and ensure the continued safety of our students. I will support the implementation of a robust social-emotional health support system in all our schools to work on prevention of safety issues.

5. What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the current Board of Education, and Superintendent?

The Board of Education and Superintendent share the strength that they have upheld their commitment to transparency and reestablishing trust that was broken. The current board is clearly made up of individuals who care deeply and are devoted to trying to provide high quality education to our students. By and large, the Board Members strongly feel the need to implement social justice for those that are underserved.

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One of the Superintendent's strengths is his genuine love of children, belief in the educational mission, and congenial demeanor with which he tried to build relationships.

One of the weaknesses of Board is that they are largely inexperienced with only two of the seven not serving in their first term. This will be even more prominent after this upcoming election. A lack of institutional knowledge and deep understanding of the school system could be terminal for a Board to be effective. I believe that my 20 years in the school system working at all levels from elementary school to high school to policy committee to Community Advisory Committee to Board interactions has given me the unique ability to fill that void.

While Dr. Martirano's first year has made some dramatic steps towards repairing the damage he inherited. He will need to continue his commitment to make the hard, painful decisions that are likely necessary to bring the school system back into alignment with our fiduciary responsibilities.

6. How would you exercise oversight of the HCPSS budget, after it has been approved?

First and foremost, we need to develop a multi-year strategic plan that is directly tied to the budget, is focused on the operations of the budget, and demands deliverable metrics by which the Board can determine whether the goals of the school system are being met. We need to know that every budget area and budget area manager has to report in on their performance metrics with an eye to accountability. It is equally important to ensure that they are not treating budgeting accountability like "other duties as assigned", but instead as a critical piece of their job for which they must deliver quantifiable data on performance and be held accountable. We insist that our teachers judge their students against objective measures. Shouldn't our administrators be held to the same standard?

Once a month at the Board meetings, there is an Operating Budget Finance Report in the consent agenda. I will do my homework with this document. I will come prepared to ask questions having looked for variances, discrepancies, and overages. It might be worthwhile to restructure the nature of this report and expand the data included to look at historical spending and revenue rates compared to current spending and revenue rates in non-summary format for multiple years rather than just the previous year. I will request that this information be publicly provided to the Board of Education.

I would also ask for a timeline of contract renewals from the past three years and their length of term. By knowing what is upcoming (monthly, quarterly, annually) we can be better prepared to have appropriate oversight and accountability.

Additionally, I will suggest that each budget category manager be held responsible for managing to their budget area. If we review past budget proceedings we can often see where errors were made in preparing the budget largely due to the lack of accountability

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for overseeing one's area. By requiring additional data, tracking it quarterly, and spending considerable time outside of Board meetings analyzing the data, I think oversight and accountability can be markedly improved.

At least three months in advance of the Superintendent's budget proposal, we can inform the Superintendent of the Board's priorities and then track the budget's alignment to these and thereby increase oversight.

Another improvement that we can make to budget process is to work with the Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer, County Executive, County Council, and other funding authorities to develop a five year projected operating budget similar to the capital budget.

As a policy wonk and data nerd, I will dig deep in the information, bring it to light and ask the hard questions for full accountability.

Further, I will continue to read and do data analysis of the existing budget book so that I know what to expect and to be able to recognize when additional reporting is inconsistent with those expectations.

I will continue to advocate for a balanced budget and full funding from the county above simply meeting inaccurate and inadequate Maintenance of Effort (MOE) numbers.

7. The HCPSS has experienced less socio-economic diversity of population in schools. Discuss related concerns and how you would address them. Include your ideas about how to provide equity in the HCPSS.

I am not sure that I agree with the underlying premise of this question. In many of our schools, we have significant socio-economic diversity. What we lack is socioeconomic diversity among all our schools. It's like the difference between intermural and intramural sports--some of our schools have great intramural diversity but we lack intermural diversity. One of the most significant impacts of this gap in school-based donations and fundraising to support school activities and athletics. Additionally, the supports needed in academics are vastly different in schools with high density Free and Reduced Meal (FARMs) populations than that of schools with a preponderance of high income student body. We will need to provide resource allocation, to include staff, proportional to the needs of the schools to deliver effective and efficient education.

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8. Do you believe the HCPSS budget should have a lower level of increase, or be fully funded? If fully funded, where do you suggest the County budget cut elsewhere to accommodate? If lowered, where do you suggest the HCPSS budget be cut?

I believe the HCPSS budget should be fully funded.

As a county, we need to decide if our revenue stream is sufficient to support high quality schools. We could encourage the County Executive to consider additional funding sources from lottery and casino money to increasing the transfer tax to reevaluating the conservative estimates on debt load from the Spending Authority Committee.

The third wealthiest county in America should be able to afford to attract and retain high quality teachers with a commensurate wage, afford preK for our most disadvantaged children, afford quality special education services that are responsive to the needs of the student body, and afford education that prepares all our children for their chosen career or college. We hope that our county leadership recognizes and accommodates these needs without sacrificing the health and welfare of all our citizens.

9. Where do you think the next high school(s) should be built? Why? In what order?

With the March 8th decision by the BOE to move forward with the Mission Road site, I believe that we need to do everything in our power to accelerate the construction and opening of that site. The decision has already been made and going back on that now will likely add years until the opening of HS #13.

Additionally, we need to immediately begin to locate an adequate site for HS #14 in the northeast portion of the county to address to continued population growth in that location.

10. How would you remediate overcrowding in schools?

Since we can neither afford to construct schools at the needed frequency nor build them fast enough to remediate overcrowding, we must face the painful reality of the need to redistrict. We need to follow HCPSS policy 6010: School Attendance Areas.

In 2017, as a member of the HCPSS Community Advisory Council, I sat on the policy review committee for policy 6010. During this time, I strongly advocated for the addition of strong measures of socio-economic diversity to be **balanced** with the school system's other needs. In order to learn more about this subject, I attended a conference at the US Department of Education called School Diversity in Action with the head of the HCPSS Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Staff. After learning how other school systems across the US have successfully implemented school diversity through attendance areas, I brought the research and data to the Office of School Planning as well as the Board of Education.

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I provided meaningful metrics that could be used in lieu of possibly polygon based data and possibly FERPA (Family Educational Right and Privacy Act) protected FARMs data.

We currently have sufficient seats in the western part of the county to accommodate all students. By shifting neighborhoods and strong feeds to the west in a rippling effect, we could follow the guidelines of policy 6010, redistrict, and have the added benefit of increasing socioeconomic diversity intermurally.

11. What time do you think Elementary, Middle and High Schools in the HCPSS should start the day? If any changes are proposed, how would you accommodate funding needs to implement?

All the science points to a recommended school start time after 8 a.m. and I am a firm believer in science and evidence-based policy. As such, in the ideal world, all HCPSS schools would begin after 8 a.m.

Unfortunately, if the Board were to approve later school start and stop times today, it would function as an unfunded mandate. Until the debt is solved and budget balanced, there is not currently flexibility within our funding to accommodate the increased costs of later school start times without cutting other areas.

Approximately 85% of our school system budget is personnel costs. Unless we are willing to reduce our personnel or personnel costs, I do not believe we can currently undertake this as a new initiative.

Instead, I will continue to work with the Superintendent to look for options and innovative solutions to fund this endeavor, whether it is a public/private partnership or a grant funded initiative.

12. Do you believe that local Boards of Education in MD should have the right to terminate their Superintendents for cause? If the law changes, what procedures do you suggest for retaining due process?

Yes, I believe there should be local control of Superintendent termination for cause. Current Maryland law is based on the belief that the mission of education could better be safeguarded at the state level by vesting the authority to terminate a local superintendent solely in the State Superintendent. I would argue that it is neither realistic nor reasonable to expect the State Superintendent of Education to intimately know the professional performance, strengths and weaknesses of all 24 county superintendents. Similarly, the State Superintendent cannot be expected to be aware of citizen concerns, attend Board of Education meetings, and be aware of the day-to-day interactions and operations of the HCPSS.

The authority to terminate a local superintendent needs to be vested with the local Board of Education which (a) oversees daily operations, (b) interacts with the families

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and seeks to respond to the needs of their children, (c) interacts with the teachers who are the front line with our students, and (d) which is in the best position to observe and evaluate the performance, goals, and strategies of the leadership team.

The right of due process is derived directly from the 5th and 14th Amendments of the United States Constitution. It can be divided into two parts-- (1) substantive due process, and (2) procedural due process.

Substantive due process asks the question of whether the government's deprivation of a person's life, liberty, or property is justified by a sufficient purpose.¹ For the purpose of delineating what is sufficient purpose for termination, the Superintendent's contract should include language a termination clause outlining what are the possible causes for termination to include but not limited to: engaging in an immoral act, incompetence, negligence, or conduct that is unbecoming to the Superintendent's position, a plea or finding of guilt in a felony, theft offense, drug abuse offense, or violation of municipal ordinance.

In terms of procedural due process, the canonical, applicable US Supreme Court case is Cleveland Board of Education v. Loudermill. In this case the Supreme Court held that:

that the principle that an individual must be given an opportunity for a hearing before he is deprived of any significant property interest means that an employee with a constitutionally protected property interest in his public employment must be given "some kind of hearing" prior to being discharged. The employee must be given notice and an opportunity for hearing that is appropriate to the circumstances before deprivation of the property or liberty interest; if provision is made for a "full" post-deprivation hearing, then the pre-deprivation hearing can be limited to a process that enables the public employer to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to support the deprivation. At a minimum, that includes pre-termination notice of the charges against the employee, an explanation of the employer's evidence, and an opportunity for the employee to respond, both to the charges and to the action the employer proposes. A more elaborate post-termination hearing must then follow within a "meaningful time."²

In order to ensure due process, the Superintendent contract should also delineate procedural due process for termination with:

1. notice of charges,
2. an explanation of the evidence against the party being terminated,
3. an opportunity for the employee to respond to the charges and the action the Board proposes, and
4. A post-termination hearing.

¹https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/faculty_scholarship/718

²https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/labor_law/meetings/2008/ac2008/143.authcheckdam.pdf

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13. Do you believe the Board of Education members should be elected countywide or by district? Why? If by district, which type of districting system is best? Do you believe concerns about accountability are more easily addressed with districting?

I believe Board of Education members should be elected countywide for two reasons. The first is that as a Board of Education member, I should be representing all the students, not just a geographic subset. I want to approach our student mission globally, not provincially. I worry that with the installation of Community Superintendents coupled with district based BOE members, we could segregate into two communities--the haves and the have-nots. For example, our "inner-city" Columbia schools could be separated into a geographic isolated pocket and have less resources since the personal wealth within the schools to supplement official funding cannot keep up with wealthier schools.

The second reason I favor countywide elections is that there are problems with the adoption of the upcoming councilmanic system. There is no alignment between school attendance areas and the council districts.

For example, the majority of Howard High School families live in District 1, yet Howard High School is not in District 1, but instead District 2. Who will be the advocate for Howard High School--the representative from District 1 or 2?

Instead of councilmanic BOE elections, we need to do a better job of putting the BOE area representative on the front page of every school's website. We need to have a uniform tab for each school's website that directs families whom to address their questions to if there are problems or concerns. Board of Education members need to hold themselves accountable for constituent services. They need to provide routine and regular interactions with engaged parents. They need to work hand-in-hand with the community to solve problems and tackle concerns at a personal level.

Instead of focusing on geographic accountability, I think we need to focus on straight up public transparency and accountability for the whole school system. We are stronger together than we are apart.

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14. What percentage of overcapacity do you think should close schools to development in the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance? The maximum number of years of halting development in an overcrowded school is 4, should that number be changed? If so, why?

We have allowed development to outpace our ability to provide adequate public services and facilities. We need only look as far as the Northeast corner of the county to see where our calculations have resulted in dangerously overcapacity high schools. We need to address this problem systematically and systemically.

I think the current formula for overcapacity in the APFO calculations is too simple. We need a more robust calculation that utilizes projections of school based populations rather than just current enrollment. A school with 110% capacity and declining enrollment projections is not equivalent to a school at 105% capacity with high density development underway and projections for growing school enrollment. In the first case, it would be less important to declare a school closed due to APFO than the 105% capacity school with dramatic population growth. If we design an overcapacity formula with a robust algorithm to close schools that projects capacity beyond current enrollment, we can better manage growth in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner.

We need to have a system where developers are not able to game the system. We need to ensure that developers pay their fair share to provide for adequate facilities to include schools. When we have high rates of development, we need to have effective means to limit development until the schools and the county can catch up. Four years seems like an insufficient time frame to truly gauge the impact of approved new construction in new developments. We need to be able to accurately assess and project enrollment growth without punishing the students.

15. What is your position on the burden of proof in Special Education litigation?

The current legal case that holds in Maryland and pertains to the burden of proof in special education litigation is the US Supreme Court case *Schaffer v. Weast*. This case holds that the burden of proof lies on the party seeking relief. If a parent petitions for relief and wants changes in services outlined on the IEP, then they have the responsibility to provide the evidence necessary to precipitate the change to be made by the court. If the school system seeks relief, then the burden of proof falls to them. There are states in which the state legislature and/or the Board of Education have assigned the burden to the school district. Absent legislative, judicial or regulatory change in Maryland, burden of proof will remain with the party seeking relief.

With the introduction of Maryland HB1489 in the 2018 General Assembly session, there is the potential for regulatory change in the burden of proof. The Maryland State Board of Education (MABE) does not support the passage of HB1489. They state: "MABE is

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concerned with the potential unintended consequences of shifting the burden of proof; including the increase in cost and duration of IEP challenges and the resulting delay in students receiving the services they need until the completion of the dispute."

The Howard County Special Education Community Advisory Committee supports passage of the bill for the following reasons:

"• School districts write the IEPs, control the educational records, retain legal counsel, and employ the witnesses they call.

- They can also change a child's school without parental consent.
- States that have shifted their burden of proof to schools have been rewarded with fewer due process hearings because there is more accountability in the process."

If we believe that costs are reduced with fewer due process hearings and a commensurate increased accountability, we should consider supporting HB1489.

That being said, I think it as important that we begin to take steps to rectify previous mismanagement and structural issues within our special education services. Dr. Martirano has begun to take actions to remediate special education concerns. I see this as an effective near-term strategy to alleviate the burden on families in the absence new legislation.

16. What is your position regarding cell phone usage by students in school?

Before I address cell phones, I believe we need to ensure that students who use eReaders and similar assistive electronic devices be allowed to continue their usage when appropriate. We had the experience with one of our children that he was reluctant to read longer, more challenging books because of the physical intimidation factor of a stack of paper bound together. When we purchased an eReaders, he was willing to try reading longer, more instructionally appropriate books because he could not see their physical size. As well, many eReaders allow for the press-and-hold feature to define words. This feature is fantastic for not breaking the flow of reading while allowing a student to expand their vocabulary and context.

I believe we should have a graduated program for cell phones in schools. This outline features the least restrictive option and local control would be given to principals to have more restrictive cell phone usage in the school building and teachers in the classroom. This means that individual teachers have the absolute ability to prohibit cell phone usage in class. This also means that principals may put in place additional restrictions on cell phone usage outside the classroom (for example, banning cell phone usage during certain times).

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Here is what it would look like:

Elementary: If you want to send a cell phone with your child, it will stay in their backpack or bag. It will be turned off and can only be used before or after school. Children will not be allowed to check their phones during the day. We understand that because some children stay after school or walk home unaccompanied, you may choose to give your child a way to reach you or feel it is important for safety and security. The cell phone will not be used in instruction or during non-instructional times. eReader use by students may be allowed by the teacher during quiet reading time if the child only uses it for reading books.

Middle School: Cell phone use is permitted before and after the instructional day and during lunch times if the principal approves. Teachers may elect to allow instructional use, but this practice is discouraged given the inequities present in cell phone ownership. When teachers utilize cell phones as part of the instructional program, teachers will provide alternative means of electronic access for those students who do not have cell phones. Classroom cell phone usage is controlled by the teacher in his/her classroom. eReader use by students may be allowed by the teacher when appropriate. Usage of a cell phone outside of a classroom but inside the school building is controlled by the principal.

High School: Cell phone use is permitted before and after the instructional day and during lunch times if the principal approves. Teachers may elect to allow students instructional use of their cell phones. When teachers utilize cell phones as part of the instructional program, teachers will provide alternative means of electronic access for those students who do not have cell phones. Classroom cell phone usage is controlled by the teacher in his/her classroom. Usage of a cell phone outside of a classroom but inside the school building is controlled by the principal.

17. Describe positions you have taken, or votes you have made which you feel are the most important with regard to the position you seek. Describe how you championed these causes or how you publicized your position. Please also include information on any position or vote you made that you regret, or about which you feel differently.

My strongest personal testimony was presented on the issue of policy 6010, school attendance areas. I recommended that the HCPSS Office of Planning consider using different data like census-block data or Pupil Personnel Data to track socioeconomic diversity rather than risk lawsuit from use of possibly FERPA protected FARMs data. I also advocated that there are better measures of socioeconomic diversity than FARMs data, such as parent educational attainment, homeownership, etc. I advocated for evidence-based data metrics to be employed for full accountability.

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I did this in order to help the school system mitigate risk by use of possible FERPA protected data. I championed the addition of tangible, measurable data metrics so that the redistricting decisions can be made based on evidence, not just in response to those that shout the loudest. I was able to advocate for this position by being on the 6010 policy review committee, which met over the summer where I had to give up time with my family who was not in school. I attended a conference at the US Department of Education to learn more. I brought the information from the US Department of Education to the Policy Office, the Office of School Planning, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office. I testified at public hearing providing both verbal and written testimony.

Additionally, I am still very proud of my advocacy efforts to make policy review committee meetings more accessible to the community. Over the course of four years on the statutorily appointed HCPSS Community Advisory Council, I repeatedly advocated for changes to the timing of the policy review meetings, for expansion of stakeholder groups, for the elimination of policy review committees being conducted over the summer when advocacy groups like the CAC and PTAs were not in session, and for increased transparency in the providing the draft documents to stakeholders at all stages of the review process. I advocated for this at CAC meetings, in person with the Policy Office, in phone calls and emails with the Board and the Policy Office, at public testimony with the Board and Superintendent, and in person with the Superintendent.

18. What specific actions have you taken that benefited the community, either as an elected official or as a county resident? Have you ever testified before the Howard County Board of Education? If so, describe positions you have taken.

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I served for two years as the Chairperson of the HCPSS Community Advisory Committee, the liaison between the Board of Education and the community at large, and two years as Vice Chairperson. During this time, I brought in speakers to education our membership on the following topics:

- Policies Under Review
- Canvas, the Learning Management System,
- Cultural Proficiency: Getting to the Heart of Excellence with Equity in the HCPSS,
- A Day in the Life of a Principal: Understanding all the moving parts and different pieces that a principal directs to make a school work,
- Birth to age Five Education in HCPSS,
- FY18 Proposed Budget,
- World Languages,
- AP Participation and Performance,
- What is being done for Struggling Students, and
- Attendance Areas and Redistricting
- School Start and Dismissal Times Initiatives
- HCPSS Connect, the new gradebook and student information portal for parents
- 6th grade outdoor education
- The hiring and training of high school athletics coaches; the relationship between athletics and activities managers (AAMs) and boosters organizations at individual schools; and any planned changes for athletics programs
- Digital Education Initiatives
- The results and data from the initial administration of the PARCC testing
- Next Generation Science Curriculum, high school science curriculum
- Innovations in Our Education: The use of the Canvas learning management system by student leaders at River Hill HS to build a stronger, informed community

I did this so that our membership understood the complexities and robustness of our programs throughout our school system. Working to keep our membership informed allows for discussion, deliberation, and collaboration. These are the skills necessary to be a successful and productive BOE member.

Prior to that, through the PTAs at my children's schools I have done many projects that have benefitted the larger community. One of the most rewarding projects was when I brought Matt de la Peña, a Newberry Award winning Hispanic Author to Harper's Choice

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Middle School. He gave two grade-wide talks and then conducted a writer's workshop. This was impactful because I was able to connect a successful, young Hispanic professional with students of color and students who had grown up in an economically challenged home as de la Peña had. It is through the culminations of years of efforts like this that I contribute to the community.

I have given 30+ policy review committee testimonies and 20+ Community Advisory Council testimonies to the Board of Education. I have tried to offer the BOE the consensus opinions of the CAC and to notify the Board when there are issues or concerns with the policies as proposed. I have had to incorporate the feedback of CAC members, even when it was in opposition to others or my own thoughts. I would routinely research the issues and dissect the policies to present the Board with areas that might need additional consideration, make proposals for amendments or additions, rather than just lambasting the policy or program.

19. If you had to make School Budget cuts, what are the top three things you would NOT cut and the top three things you would? Why?

I would not cut the following:

1. Student safety--Unfortunately, we live in times where student safety routinely feels threatened. We cannot deliver quality instruction if our students and staff are not safe and secure.
2. Classroom instruction--We cannot continue to increase class sizes. We need to protect best practices for instruction delivery and science tells us that smaller class sizes are critical.
3. Special education services--The population of students with 504s and IEPs is growing. We must ensure that all of our students receive educational services appropriate to their needs.

I would consider cutting:

1. New programs and initiatives--There are multiple good ideas like middle school athletics and elementary school world languages that would be wonderful to support if additional budget dollar were available. As they not, I would prioritize core instruction above these offerings.
2. Non-school based positions--Dr. Martirano originally identified a savings of \$3.7 million with the reallocation of 47 non-school based positions. The number was lowered in the final budget. As these are non-instructional positions, we could look here for reductions.
3. Transportation costs--I believe if we developed a fair, equitable, and effective redistricting strategy, we could leverage opportunities to reduce transportation costs.

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20. How would you improve detection and response to bullying?

In trying to research and answer this question, I have read numerous articles on bullying and cyberbullying. None of the articles agreed how to combat this endemic problem. As such, I am not going to tell you that I have the answer to fix the bullying and cyberbullying problem. I will tell you that I can listen to the experts who have better ideas than I do-- the youth, the victims, and the families of victims. If we listen to teen voice and we listen to our families that are impacted and then work to implement their ideas and the solutions, then we will have a blueprint for our work.

In addition to listening, I believe we need to fully understand and implement programs in accordance with Grace's Law 2.0, assuming it passes in the second chamber of the MD State House. I believe we need to continue to support student voice circles, cultural proficiency training, and advocate for parental involvement in all our student's lives.

Staff needs to develop strong, positive relationships with students that will provide all our students with a trusted adult when they see something. Our teachers are the first line of defense in detection as they are the ones spending the most time with our children. If training exists for bullying detection, we need to provide it to our teachers and staff as part of their professional development. If the 'see something, say something' campaign works, then we need to proactively engage our students and let them know what to do.

By Authority, The People's Voice PAC, Lisa Markovitz, Treasurer