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## CECIL COUNTY, MARYLAND

Office of the County Executive  
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December 5, 2023

Superintendent Jeffrey A. Lawson  
Cecil County Public Schools  
201 Booth Street  
Elkton, Maryland 21921

Dear Superintendent Lawson,

Thank you for reaching out and for soliciting our input regarding the format of your FY25 budget submission. Like our fellow elected leaders—not only in Cecil County, but across the state—we are very concerned about the implications of Blueprint/Kirwan. As you read in the enclosed letter from the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo), a bipartisan statewide body of local elected officials, there are widespread concerns about the future of school funding in Maryland. Among them is the great and growing concern that county government leaders are essentially being forced to “throw money over the fence” with no ability to provide their citizens with spending accountability; the very citizens who fund our public schools. As noted in the letter from MACo, “there is an overarching concern that the default requirements [for school funding] result in counties receiving little-to-no spending specifics and vague budget requests. Moreover, counties assert that more clarity will ensure fair negotiation practices and build public trust in our governmental and educational institutions.” We agree wholeheartedly with this position, especially with the need to be able to clearly communicate to our constituents precisely where their hard-earned dollars are going. If *we* don’t know, how can they? Indeed, this call for greater transparency will only be heightened by the demands of Blueprint implementation.

In the recent past, CCPS budget requests have relied on the use of graphs to illustrate large buckets of CCPS spending or isolated snippets of data to justify larger budget appropriation requests. These broad tactics have often been employed to suggest insufficient levels of funding by Cecil County Government. This is simply not helpful for county leaders. The residents and those who represent them need to see the *whole* picture, in detail, and in black and white.

We have a simple solution in response to your request for feedback. Please provide a line-item budget for the previous five years (this look-back being necessary to show pre-COVID funding levels and funding levels for COVID-impacted fiscal years) as well as a proposed budget in that same vein. We would ask that you take a look at the format of Cecil County Government’s budget, which has been laid out in such a way that it can be easily understood by the general public. We would also ask that you provide a line-item budget, school by school, for these past five years. This will be tremendously helpful as we navigate the impact of Blueprint and concerns that it will draw resources away from some schools while adding to others. We would also ask that you provide “apples to apples” point-in-time, year-to-year student population data system wide; teacher, para, support staff, and administration numbers year to year; and point-in-time class sizes, including equivalent staff for said classes. We

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are confident that you can see the value in providing a comprehensive and transparent budget as you seek funding for FY25 and beyond.

We appreciate your willingness to take measures toward greater transparency moving forward. At the same time, it is our sincere hope that you will stop the use of hyperbolic rhetoric and divisive tactics as a part of your strategy to secure greater funding for the school system. That approach has added unnecessary stress to our teachers, parents, and students, when instead you could have been working with your government counterparts toward solutions; allowing teachers to teach, parents to parent, and students to learn. That said, your good-faith effort to partner on how the budget is presented and to provide a clearer picture of school funding does give us hope for a brighter future.

On behalf of our citizens, thank you in advance for joining us in the good stewardship of their taxpayer dollars.

Regards,



Danielle Hornberger  
*County Executive*



Jackie Gregory  
*Council President*

Affirm:



*Council Member*



*Council Member*



*Council Member*