

EACC BOE Comments

3/1026

We are at a pivotal moment in education in Charles County. We recently concluded an unprecedented two-year contract that was respected by both the Board of Education (BOE) and the County Commissioners.

In our last negotiations, we agreed to salary and policy changes for two years, but we were brought back to the table within months to renegotiate the agreed-upon salary. The Education Association of Charles County (EACC) then accepted a 2% reduction from what we had just agreed upon, while the policy changes remained intact. This meant sacrificing individual teacher time during in-service days and altering evaluation processes, translating into a loss of time and money after we had already had an agreement.

As we look ahead this year, we are seriously concerned that we may be asked again to revisit the table for negotiations, despite having already reached a two-year agreement. Staff members cannot be expected to shoulder financial burdens alone. A troubling precedent has been established where staff bear the brunt of financial shortfalls, and this must change. If a two-year agreement is not honored, it was never truly an agreement.

I am urging you to support the superintendent's budget request vocally and with conviction. If you have concerns about specific items in the budget that may not benefit the students and staff of Charles County, please raise those issues with Dr. Navarro. However, if you see the necessity for the entire budget proposed, I ask that you support it. Discuss it with friends and family, post about it online, and have conversations with elected officials, similar to what was done regarding the bus changes.

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3/1026

To be clear, I am not asking for support exclusively for the EACC; I am asking for the support of all staff and students. If the financial needs of education are not met this year, we need to start discussing potential cuts and the sacrifices that students, staff, and other stakeholders will have to make. For too long, staff salaries have been the first area of fiscal sacrifice, and Charles County cannot afford to continue this trend, especially when surrounding Maryland counties offer more competitive starting salaries. Two out of three counties provide higher maximum salaries for professionals with a bachelor's degree, and all three offer higher maximums for those with a master's or doctorate.

It is also important to note that the budget contribution from the county has been declining. Currently, we see a concerning reversal in our investment in the students and staff of Charles County, with the state funding 51% of the county education budget while the county contributes only 44.5%. This was not always the case. I believe the county should prioritize the needs of the students and staff in Charles County over the state's contributions as they have done in the past.

During my tenure as president of the Education Association of Charles County, I have consistently emphasized that effective staffing relies on providing adequate time and fair compensation. Teachers need time to complete their tasks effectively, and they deserve professional compensation that reflects their qualifications compared to their peers in

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similar fields. Now is the time to prioritize what has already been agreed upon for our dedicated staff.