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Board responds to County Executive's budget message

The Board of Education of Baltimore County appreciates the commitment of County Executive Johnny Olszewski Jr. to prioritize education by investing an additional \$32 million (over the current fiscal year appropriation) in our schools.

“We are very pleased that the County Executive's proposed budget preserves the Board's recommended funding for teacher compensation (including step increases and COLAs), as well as adds school counselors, social workers, psychologists, special education teachers, and ESOL teachers,” commented Board Chairwoman Kathleen Causey.

County Executive Olszewski also announced a proposal, consistent with the Board's approved budget request, to increase the number of schools providing free breakfast to students in need. If approved by the Council, the budget would allow for expansion of the program to schools with high numbers of students in poverty.

“Too many children in BCPS come to us hungry. Almost half of all students qualify for free and reduced-price meals. Expanding programs to feed children – to ensure that all are equipped to learn – truly is a necessity,” stated Board Member Lily Rowe.

The County Executive, in his budget address, also recognized the need for smarter investment and prioritization of investing in educators over technology. Olszewski proposed a device ratio of 1:5 for Grades K-2, as well as a multi-year replacement of current laptops with Chromebooks for all grades.

“We have to be honest about which investments work, and which ones don't. Technology plays a critical role in our schools today - but devices can't teach our kids to read the way a teacher can. Educators...are the most important resource we have,” wrote Olszewski.

Board Vice Chairwoman Julie Henn agrees.

“Since joining the Board, I have urged more responsible investment in, and use of, technology - calling for affordable and reliable devices and limiting screen time, especially for the earliest grades. Our children need teachers - not more and more expensive tech. These are steps in the right direction,” Henn commented.

Olszewski also addressed the significant capital spending needs, given aging and insufficient school infrastructure. The Board shares these concerns, recognizing the vast needs for funding for new school construction, given deteriorating facilities and dangerous overcrowding.

“While we are pleased to see planning for a new Lansdowne High School move forward, we recognize that many schools in the county are facing serious facilities needs, as well. The Board is encouraged by the County Executive's proposed funding of a 10-year school construction plan to provide a clear and equitable path forward as we prioritize capital spending as dollars become available,” remarked Causey.

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