

# ADVOCATE FOR ADEQUATE FUNDING



FEBRUARY 29, 2024 (Updated)

## INFORMATION about SCHOOL FUNDING SOURCES

School funding formulas and budgets are complicated. In Maryland, the state and county governments share the responsibility for funding schools. Since the county's revenues are up, the state expects the county to fund more of the general fund budget. We know the resources to do this exist in our county, and we call on our elected officials to prioritize and serve our children ahead of the desire to convince our community that our resources are scarce.

- This is complicated further with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This new state law focuses on providing more state money to local districts where the counties cannot afford to give more. The Blueprint also requires that local districts put more resources into schools that have students that need more support – for special ed, ELL services, or to close achievement gaps.
- The state's funding for Blueprint implementation is being phased in over multiple years. The FY 2025 Budget for the 2024-25 school year has the smallest percentage increase in funding, so this creates a one-year bridge that needs more local funding support to manage before more funding becomes available from the state.
- In past budget cycles, the State of Maryland has stepped up to help fill the funding gap that our lack of local funding has created. This year, that will not be the case.
- The county's increasing wealth has demonstrated to the state that the county should be providing more funding to our schools. This year, that has resulted in an unanticipated decrease in state funding.

## OBSERVATIONS about the CHOICES of the Washington County Commissioners

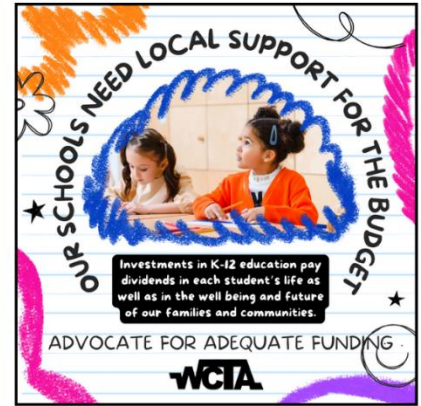
- The county's general fund has grown by 19% since 2021. The amount that the county provides to WCPS has only grown by 5.67% since 2021.
- Public safety spending by the county government has grown by nearly 40% since 2020. If WCPS's funding had kept pace with public safety funding increases, we'd have another \$30 million in our budget. The commissioners don't have to choose between adequate funding for public safety or adequate funding for public schools. There is plenty of money for both. We refuse to be pitted against public safety, and we don't want to pit public safety needs against the needs of our students.
- The county staff has underestimated revenues for multiple years. In FY 2023, the original approved budget for the county was \$37 million dollars less than what the county government actually earned in total revenue at the end of that year. This resulted in budget surpluses that could have been allocated in the budget process to adequately fund requests from the school board and other county agencies. In 2023 alone, the surplus amount was \$25 million dollars. The county has the resources to adequately fund the schools without raising taxes.
- When the previously seated Commissioners chose to cut income taxes in 2022 and 2023 (from 3.2% to the current 2.95%), that decision lowered the amount the county received from the state's Disparity Grant Program, and Washington County lost out on \$18 million state dollars.
- If the Commissioners had not cut income taxes in recent years, the revenues would be available to address the funding needs for public education, public safety, and the county's Commission on Aging.

## BELIEFS about PUBLIC EDUCATION & ADEQUATE FUNDING

- Our elected officials of the past have made decisions that have forced us to beg for what our students need. Our current elected officials can make different decisions that move our schools to a brighter future.
- Our schools must serve all children, whatever their race, their gender, their zip code, where they were born, whatever their religion. Some elected officials have said that if we provide more staff and resources in our city schools that serve more diverse communities, or schools with more kids with special needs, ELL students, or with larger achievement gaps, that we will have to raise class sizes in our county schools that serve less diverse communities. **This either-or/false choice argument is not true.** If the commissioners provide adequate funding, then we could provide the appropriate number of teachers, administrators, and support staff for all our schools.

# What can supporters of our schools do?

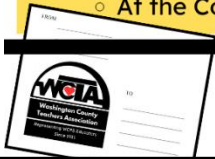
- **PREPARE YOUR MESSAGE:** What stories, images, or incidents could you share with the elected county commissioners to illustrate the needs of our schools? Brainstorm ideas and make your plan to speak up for our students.
- **COMMUNICATE YOUR PERSPECTIVE & SUPPORT for ADEQUATE FUNDING:**
  - Write a postcard to one or more commissioner. Send it to WCTA to hand deliver, drop it by 100 West Washington Street, or put it in the mail.
  - Write an email to and send it to the Commissioners. (“CC” Dr. Sovine, BOE President Melissa Williams, and WCTA President Carol Mowen.)
  - Ask other WCPS supporters (parents, students, community leaders) to do the same. (See [www.washco-md.net/county-commissioners/](http://www.washco-md.net/county-commissioners/) for emails.)
- **PROVIDE PUBLIC COMMENT:**
  - At the Board of County Commissioners’ Evening Meetings
    - February 27 at the Town of Funkstown City Hall, 6 PM
    - March 26 in Williamsport City Hall, 6 PM
    - April 23 in Smithsburg Council Chambers (2nd Floor), 7 PM
  - At the Board of Education’s meetings on March 19 and April 16, 6 PM
  - At the County’s public budget hearing on May 21 at HCC, 6 PM



**Change the Narrative!**

**Tell the truth....**





**Hold elected officials accountable.**



Choose one specific commissioner for your postcard message. (You can write more than one postcard.)

- Include a **THANKS** to the commissioners for their service to the county.
- Ask for support to provide adequate funding to support our students and invest in our community.

## Use Imagery, Tell a Story, Use your Voice!

<p>Dear Commissioner _____,</p> <p>Today in my classroom at (school name), I (or my students)</p> <p>(Write a descriptive sentence or two to paint a snapshot image for the reader.)</p> <p>I invite you to come out to see (school name) so you can better understand my job as an educator and the needs of our schools.</p> <p>Contact WCTA or WCPS to arrange a visit.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  <span style="font-size: 2em; background-color: black; color: white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px;">1</span> </div>	<p>Dear Commissioner _____,</p> <p>Teaching (or learning) today is not like teaching in (date and place of your choice).</p> <p>(Write a brief description or explanation to illustrate the comparison.)</p> <p>Please come and see for yourself how the changes since (date) have impacted teaching (and/or learning) in our Washington County schools.</p> <p>Contact WCTA or WCPS to arrange a visit.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  <span style="font-size: 2em; background-color: black; color: white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px;">2</span> </div>	<p>Dear Commissioner _____,</p> <p>Please consider ways that you can adjust the county’s budget allocation to the school system to provide adequate funding for our public schools.</p> <p>(Describe why adequate funding is important to you and/or your family.)</p> <p>(Explain ways that the county could provide additional funding.)</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  <span style="font-size: 2em; background-color: black; color: white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px;">3</span> </div>	<p>Dear Commissioner _____,</p> <p>Today, my job as a WCPS educator at (school name) was like (insert simile).</p> <p>(Write a brief description or explanation to illustrate the simile.)</p> <p>I hope this (description or explanation) helps you better understand why we need for you to support our schools with adequate funding.</p> <div style="text-align: right;">  <span style="font-size: 2em; background-color: black; color: white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px;">4</span> </div>
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## For more info, go to the following websites:

Washington Co. Citizen’s Budgets at <https://www.washco-md.net/budget-finance/financial-documents/>, Washington Co. BOE FY 2025 Budget Presentations and Information at <https://wcpemd.com/>, and the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future at <https://blueprint.marylandpublicschools.org/>