



18047 Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740



301-797-7682 (office)



301-465-1358 (cell)



Carol Mowen, President



cmowen@mseane.org



www.mywcta.org

TO: News Editor, Herald Mail Newspapers
FROM: Carol Mowen, WCTA President
RE: **Safe and Orderly Schools for Every Student and Every Staff Member: *What will it take?***
DATE: August 26, 2025

As students return to school, the work of educators continues – doing more with less to provide educational environments that effectively educate Washington county’s students. At its September 2 work session, the Washington County Board of Education (WCBOE) will begin discussing the FY 2027 General Fund Budget. As that process unfolds, I urge board members to listen to educators and prioritize the resources we know are needed to support each student’s instructional learning goals and safe, healthy environments for both students and staff.

One of the most pressing concerns is student discipline. This is not unique to Washington County—across Maryland and nationwide, educators are raising alarms. A recent National Education Association survey found that four out of five educators view student behavior as a serious problem, with 81 percent reporting that students are acting out at increasing rates.

Locally, the Washington County Teachers Association (WCTA) has bargained for stronger contract protections under Article 8: Student Discipline. But contract language cannot guarantee the safe and orderly schools our students and staff deserve. That is why WCTA has launched an “SOS Campaign” to highlight what is truly needed: more staffing, more resources, consistent enforcement of clear expectations, and developmentally and age appropriate disciplinary consequences.

No one should face repeated threats, injuries, or unsafe conditions at work. This year, new statewide protections go into effect under the Davis Martinez Public Employee Safety and Health Act. The law, passed after the tragic death of a Maryland probation officer, requires public employers—including schools—to address unsafe working conditions, workplace violence, building security, air quality, and access to proper equipment. But laws and contracts cannot solve issues without adequate funding. Our schools need more administrators to manage discipline, more paraprofessionals and behavior specialists to support teachers, smaller class sizes, more custodians and maintenance staff, and accelerated plans to fix (and replace) aging infrastructure. All of this connects directly to budget decisions—both the General Fund and the Capital Improvement Plan.

As the FY 2027 budget process begins, I urge Superintendent David Sovine and the WCBOE to fully fund the staffing and safety resources educators know are essential. I also call on Washington County citizens to make their voices heard—contact both the school board and the county commissioners and demand the resources our students and educators deserve. Fiscal responsibility is important, but safe schools and effective learning environments must come first.

###

For more information, contact Carol Mowen.