

**Karen M. Hammer**

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**From:** roxy042498@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 9:22 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Re: WCPS budget

On Monday, May 6, 2024, 09:18:23 AM EDT, roxy042498@aol.com <roxy042498@aol.com> wrote:

I am a Worcester county resident. I pay alot of money to the county in taxes. I have 3 children in the Worcester county public school system. I support a fully funded WCPS budget. I appreciate the tedious examination of the BOE budget but the time has come to move on. The county commissioners need to focus on building new schools and stop hounding the BOE for spending most of its budget on salaries. I don't know if you are aware but the cost of living has dramatically increased yet the county continues to pay the best teachers in the state a mesly salary. Stop knit picking about unimportant things or you will soon find yourselves out of a job. That's not a threat but a fact.

Thank you!  
Janelle Simpson  
211 Powell Cir  
Berlin, MD 21811

**From:** Erin Bonner <ebonner228@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 11:31 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Hearing on FY25

My name is Erin Grunden. I live at 1504 Teal Drive, Ocean City, MD. I am writing to you today not just as a special education teacher, but as a voice for our students who rely on us for support, understanding, and opportunities. Nine years ago, I made the conscious decision to join Worcester County's educational community because of the benefits it offered: fair pay, smaller class sizes, and crucial resources for students with disabilities, including vital one-on-one support for those with significant needs.

However, I'm deeply concerned that the landscape has shifted. What once drew educators like myself to Worcester County is now at risk. Our benefits are dwindling, our pay isn't keeping pace with the rising costs of living, and our classrooms are becoming increasingly more crowded. The very resources that were once our pride are now stretched thin, making it harder to meet the diverse needs of our students.

In the face of a national teacher shortage, these challenges become even more urgent. We risk losing experienced educators who have dedicated their lives to shaping the future, and we may struggle to attract new talent to fill the void. Without competitive benefits, fair compensation, and adequate support, the heart of our education system is at risk of faltering.

But let us not dwell solely on the problems; let us instead focus on the solutions. It's within YOUR power to prioritize education in our budgetary decisions, to invest in our teachers and students, and to reaffirm our commitment to excellence in education. By allocating resources wisely, by valuing the work of educators, and by prioritizing the needs of our students, we can ensure that Worcester County remains a beacon of opportunity and excellence in education.

I urge you, members of the County Commission, to consider the profound impact of your decisions on the future of our community. Please work with us to uphold the promise of quality education for all, to support our teachers, and to empower our students to reach their fullest potential. Thank you.

**From:** Ashley <ashleylandy@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 11:37 AM  
**To:** wchearing

Ashley McCaslin

120 53rd St Unit E101

To whom it may concern, my name is Ashley McCaslin and I am a student in Worcester County public schools. I attended Anne Arundel County public schools from Kindergarten through Fifth grade. For those who don't know, that is a school system near Baltimore, Maryland. During my time in that school system, the negatives severely outweighed the positives. Schools had over a 40% poverty rate, there was violence I witnessed even at such a young age, but most importantly our budgets were constantly cut. Because of this, I have a first hand understanding of just how amazing Worcester County is, and many other kids will voice just the same opinion. I also have a strong understanding of just how harmful unnecessary budget cuts can truly be. Upon moving to this school system, I noticed a strong shift in my education. Not only did my grades improve significantly, but the shift in dedication that is seen in teachers was phenomenal. Worcester County public schools have some of the most hard working and dedicated educators I have ever witnessed. The only question that stands is why are they one of the most underpaid? Why are our educators accomplishments consistently swept under the rug and not awarded? We have the money, we have the resources. Why are we restricting our public educators needs and also our students? Their job is not only to teach us, but to connect with their students, and there is no better example of that than our educators in this system.

As a student along with my peers, and teachers, we collectively feel the consequences of budget restraints and or cuts. Since our county's last budget cut, many of the activities we once could participate in are no longer accessible for us. This includes art classes, certain aspects of sports, basic class necessities, and more. I am enrolled in Stephen Decatur High school and a part of one of the largest graduating classes. Because of this, classes are already significantly crowded. If you do decide to cut our budgets once again, our rooms will become chaotic and overfilled. Teachers will become even more overworked and overwhelmed and the quality of our education will extremely deplete. Not only will the issues listed before affect the quality of our education but students will become less motivated to attend school and further contribute to the chronic absence issues. Our school system needs help, keeping our budget the same will only do more damage to what has already been done. I am writing today to use my voice as a student, we feel the unfair consequences, and our education is in your hands at this moment. Thousands of students will be affected by your decision made today, and so will our amazing educators. Thank you for taking the time to consider my thoughts.

**From:** dsudol@optonline.net  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 12:58 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget

Dawn Sudol

22 Mallard Dr. East  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

Good evening, I have been a homeowner in Worcester County for over 25 years. As a former educator and a grandmother of three current Worcester County students, I feel it is my right and obligation to address you this evening concerning the public-school budget. This high performing county has some of the best students and educators in Maryland. It is egregious that the focus isn't always on how to give more to that sector, but rather the focus seems to be that they are getting too much or superfluously spending in regard to the executive team. There will NEVER be a time in society where investing in education will not provide an enormous return on investment. This should not even be up for debate. A fully funded budget should be the bare minimum this county provides to the children and educators of Worcester County. To this point, I am extremely disappointed in Chip Bertino for not advocating for the children of this county. I am hopeful that he will vote in favor of a fully funded budget after listening to his constituents tonight. This decision is not a game and should not be taken lightly. The youth of this county deserve a fully funded budget separate from political ploys and personal agendas. If the money is there, the county commissioners have an obligation to the taxpayers, the children, and the educators to fully fund the budget. Thank you.

**Karen M. Hammer**

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**From:** Catherine McAlister <cmcalister32@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:11 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Fully Fund the WCPS BOE Budget

I am in support of fully funding the budget for Worcester County Public Schools. Good public schools are important to our community. Worcester County has good schools and should receive the financial support to keep their good standing.

Catherine W,McAlister  
142 Pine Forest Dr.  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

**From:** Keith Tracy <kt7712co@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:14 PM  
**To:** wchearing

Good evening,

As a taxpayer, parent of three Worcester County students and the spouse of a dedicated Worcester County teacher of 14 years, it is my duty to share my thoughts and expectations regarding the public-education budget. I understand that the county currently has the funds to support a fully funded budget, yet I am at a loss for why the some of the county commissioners are so against approving something that provides resources for students, pays the teachers, and ensures class sizes stay small so that our students can continue to get the world-class education that we have become accustomed to and that they deserve here in Worcester County.

It is appalling that our teachers are some of the lowest paid in Maryland when they are yielding some of the best results in the state. I know factually that my wife spends her own money each year to fund experiences for her students and invests her heart, energy, money, and time to make sure each of her students are heard, feel valued, learn and grow as productive citizens. It is absurd that she and other dedicated education professionals continually need to divert their energy to fight for the cost of living adjustments and steps that should be a given. It is ridiculous that the commissioners can use personal agendas which ultimately dictate whether my children will be one of 18 in a classroom or one of 30. My sons matter. Their learning matters. It is shameful when a select few elected officials are able to make decisions regarding my children and their education and my wife and her profession. Attacking public education is a direct attack on the future of our country. I hope that those in attendance tonight and who are responsible for this decision make the right choice concerning the budget. Maintenance of effort will insure loss of jobs, a significant decrease in morale, increased class sizes, and lack of resources; just to briefly list some of the negative fallout. A fully funded budget is the only acceptable option.

Thank you,

Keith Tracy

58 Cannon Dr.

Ocean Pines, MD 21811

**From:** Raymond Russell <russelrb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:21 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Commissioners Meeting - May 7th - Education Funding

Dear Worcester County Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong support for fully funding the proposed Board of Education budget for Worcester County. As a parent, resident and member of this community, I believe that investing in our public education system is not only essential but also critical for the prosperity and future success of our county.

The public education system plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of Worcester County. It serves as the cornerstone of our community, providing foundational knowledge and skills to our children, preparing them to become active and engaged citizens. Moreover, a strong public education system attracts businesses, families, and investment to our county, contributing to its overall economic prosperity.

Teachers are the heart and soul of our schools, tirelessly dedicating themselves to educating and nurturing the next generation. Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers has become increasingly challenging. Fully funding the Board of Education budget would enable us to attract and retain top talent, ensuring that our students receive the quality education they deserve.

I urge you to prioritize education funding and fully support the proposed Board of Education budget. By doing so, we are not only investing in the academic success of our students but also securing the future prosperity of Worcester County.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this crucial matter. I look forward to your support in fully funding the education budget and continuing to strengthen our public education system.

Sincerely,

Raymond Russell

1 Brittany Ln.

Berlin, MD 21811

Karen M. Hammer

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**From:** Catherine McAlister <cmcalister32@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:17 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Fully Fund WCPS BOE Budget

I am in support of full funding for Worcester County Public Schools. My children received a good education in WCPS. My grandson attends currently. Worcester County has good public schools. Full funding is needed to maintain our highly rated schools. Good public schools are important to the health of our community. Educating citizens is a foundation of our democracy. Fully fund the BOE budget.

David B. McAlister  
142 Pine Forest Dr.  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Andrea Kominos <AJKominos@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:31 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** may 7th commissioners meeting comment

Dear County Commissioners,

We respectfully urge you to allocate full funding to the school budget, thereby demonstrating your commitment to the future prosperity of Worcester County. Over the past decade, we have observed a concerning trend of increasing class sizes, teacher attrition, and inadequate support for both educators and students across all grade levels. This has resulted in experienced educators departing for more financially viable opportunities elsewhere, and esteemed colleagues opting for early retirement due to the challenging circumstances affecting their well-being and effectiveness in the classroom.

Persistently advocating for the educational needs of our students amidst such challenges can be exhausting, especially when witnessing the adverse impact of funding shortages on their academic and personal development. The repercussions of underfunding are already evident, and without decisive action, the situation is poised to deteriorate further.

We firmly believe that it is possible to uphold accountability in expenditure while ensuring that our school system receives the necessary resources to thrive. Merely meeting the minimum maintenance of effort is insufficient when the future success of our students is at stake.

Thank you for considering our plea.

Sincerely,  
The Teachers of Showell Elementary School

Full name: Andrea Kominos  
10465 Golf Course Rd.  
Ocean City, MD 21842

*Mrs. Andrea Kominos M.Ed.*  
SES Kindergarten Teacher  
410-632-5350

*"Act as if what you do makes a difference. IT DOES" -William James*

Andrew Berke

Ocean Pines, Maryland

I write to you today not just as a concerned citizen, taxpayer, and parent, but as a passionate advocate for the future of our community. Our education system lies at the very heart of that future, serving as the cornerstone upon which the prosperity and progress of our county rest. Yet, it is a system in dire need of support, a support that only your commitment to fully funding the education budget can provide.

Investing in education is not merely an expenditure; it is an investment in our collective tomorrow. It is an investment in the bright minds of our youth who will one day lead our county forward. It is an investment in the teachers who tirelessly dedicate themselves to shaping the minds of the next generation. And it is an investment in the economic vitality and social cohesion of our community.

By fully funding the education budget, we affirm our commitment to providing every child with an equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances. We ensure that our schools have the resources they need to offer a well-rounded education that prepares students not just for the challenges of today, but for the opportunities of tomorrow.

But the benefits of fully funding education extend far beyond the classroom. A strong education system is the bedrock of a thriving economy. It attracts businesses and industries looking for a skilled workforce, driving job creation and economic growth. It reduces crime rates and improves public health outcomes, leading to a safer and more prosperous community for all. All of which are vital for Worcester County as a whole.

However, underfunding education undermines these aspirations. It places an undue burden on teachers, forcing them to do more with less and often leaving them burnt out and disillusioned. It deprives students of essential resources and opportunities, widening the achievement gap and perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality. And it sends a message to our youth that their education is not a priority, sowing seeds of apathy and disengagement.

We cannot afford to let this happen. We owe it to ourselves, to our children, and to future generations to prioritize education and provide it with the support it needs to thrive. So I implore you, commissioners, to fully fund the education budget. Let us invest in our future today, so that tomorrow may be brighter for us all.

Dear County Commissioners,

I am writing to urge you to prioritize increasing teachers' pay in our county. As someone who was born and raised here, I have chosen to stay and work in our community. However, despite my dedication to serving as an educator, I find it increasingly difficult to afford living expenses on my current salary.

The financial strain is taking a toll on my mental health and impacting my family's well-being in ways I never anticipated. Affordable housing options are scarce, and even if they were available, I would struggle to afford them. It's disheartening to see neighboring counties like Somerset and Wicomico offering significantly higher salaries to their teachers.

Investing in higher teacher pay is not just about fair compensation—it's about recognizing the value of education and the vital role teachers play in shaping our community's future. By ensuring that educators are compensated fairly, we can attract and retain talented individuals who are committed to providing quality education for our students.

If action is not taken to address this issue, I will be forced to relocate to another county simply to be able to live comfortably and provide for my family. It's disheartening to feel that I may have to leave the community I love due to financial constraints that could be addressed with fairer compensation for educators.

I urge you to take action to address this issue and prioritize increasing teachers' pay in our county. Our educators deserve better, and our community's future depends on it.

Sincerely,  
A Struggling Teacher A.P.

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Ashley <ashleylandy@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 11:37 AM  
**To:** wchearing

Ashley McCaslin

120 53rd St Unit E101

To whom it may concern, my name is Ashley McCaslin and I am a student in Worcester County public schools. I attended Anne Arundel County public schools from Kindergarten through Fifth grade. For those who don't know, that is a school system near Baltimore, Maryland. During my time in that school system, the negatives severely outweighed the positives. Schools had over a 40% poverty rate, there was violence I witnessed even at such a young age, but most importantly our budgets were constantly cut. Because of this, I have a first hand understanding of just how amazing Worcester County is, and many other kids will voice just the same opinion. I also have a strong understanding of just how harmful unnecessary budget cuts can truly be. Upon moving to this school system, I noticed a strong shift in my education. Not only did my grades improve significantly, but the shift in dedication that is seen in teachers was phenomenal. Worcester County public schools have some of the most hard working and dedicated educators I have ever witnessed. The only question that stands is why are they one of the most underpaid? Why are our educators accomplishments consistently swept under the rug and not awarded? We have the money, we have the resources. Why are we restricting our public educators needs and also our students? Their job is not only to teach us, but to connect with their students, and there is no better example of that than our educators in this system.

As a student along with my peers, and teachers, we collectively feel the consequences of budget restraints and or cuts. Since our county's last budget cut, many of the activities we once could participate in are no longer accessible for us. This includes art classes, certain aspects of sports, basic class necessities, and more. I am enrolled in Stephen Decatur High school and a part of one of the largest graduating classes. Because of this, classes are already significantly crowded. If you do decide to cut our budgets once again, our rooms will become chaotic and overfilled. Teachers will become even more overworked and overwhelmed and the quality of our education will extremely deplete. Not only will the issues listed before affect the quality of our education but students will become less motivated to attend school and further contribute to the chronic absence issues. Our school system needs help, keeping our budget the same will only do more damage to what has already been done. I am writing today to use my voice as a student, we feel the unfair consequences, and our education is in your hands at this moment. Thousands of students will be affected by your decision made today, and so will our amazing educators. Thank you for taking the time to consider my thoughts.

**From:** Ashley Smith <ashley@starvingartistmedia.design>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 8:24 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Comment for 5/7/24 Commissioner's Meeting

Good Evening County Commissioners,

My name is Ashley Smith and I live at 96 Bramblewood Dr, Berlin MD 21811.

I would like to emphasize a fundamental truth: education is not merely an individual endeavor but a generational legacy. It's a torch passed from one hand to another, lighting the path of progress for our society. My torch was passed down from my mother and both my paternal and maternal grandmothers before me. They were all secretaries for Worcester County Public Schools. Myself, my parents, sister, son, and bonus twins are also past alumni and current students at Worcester County Public Schools.

However, this legacy is not immune to the challenges of our times. One of the most pressing concerns we face is the allocation of resources for education. Budgets are not just numbers on a spreadsheet; they are the lifeblood of our educational institutions. Adequate funding ensures that schools have the resources they need to provide quality education to every student, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Without proper funding, the flames of learning flicker and dim. Classrooms become overcrowded, essential programs are cut, and educators are forced to make do with limited resources. This not only undermines the quality of education but also perpetuates inequality, as students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected by budget constraints.

Some kids don't eat unless they come to school. Some kids see school as their safe place away from home. Some kids never experience happiness or kindness unless they're at school. These experiences are found during school hours and after school activities such as Summer Academy and After School Academy. They are provided food, enrichment activities, transportation, and a safe place to be themselves at no cost to their families due in big part to generous local donations and past school budgets being fully funded.

Investing in education is not just a moral imperative; it is an economic necessity. A well-educated workforce drives innovation, boosts productivity, and strengthens the economy as a whole. By prioritizing education in our budgets, we are not just investing in the future of our children but also laying the foundation for a prosperous society for generations to come.

I implore you to do the right thing for our students, staff, educators, and our community and fully fund the damned school budget.

Thank you.

Ashley Smith

***The Investment of a Lifetime***  
**Brandon Michael Cater**  
**511 Dueling Way**  
**Berlin Maryland 21811**

... As the Department Director of Theatre at Stephen Decatur High School, I would love to share with you the investment we put into our program to make sure that the students are prepared for life's challenges and opportunities to the best of their ability.

The aim of the theatre program, which has been in place in the county for the last 50 plus years, is to provide an intensive experience in all areas of production in theatre. Students build and paint, design lighting, sound, and costumes, and conduct business and public relations. Each of these areas is essential to the program's productions, and each of these areas of production gives a student a valuable trade skill that they can take with them into their life after high school, and use it to their advantage.

Theatre is a subject matter that is so naturally cross curricular and diverse in its areas of focus that it requires students to have a broad knowledge base in mathematics, history, science, language, and technology. It is a subject that requires a student to put that knowledge to practical use, to try something out of the ordinary and take risks, and to devote an enormous amount of their time, effort, emotion, and energy toward a culminating event that almost always has a seemingly impossible to meet deadline. And yet, it always gets met, because these students take it upon themselves to become leaders of others, example setters, masters of their craft, and true ensemble players. What educator or parent could ask for more? I can't wait for my daughter to become one of these Worcester County Students. These students believe in education. They believe in community. They believe in something greater than themselves. And they believe that if they take responsibility head on, they will achieve great things. They believe that they can be leaders and valuable contributors. This is what we need them to be. This is the experience the students of Worcester County Public Schools receive in our program.

This sounds like an education worth *fully* investing in...

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Brenda Hommel <BMHommel@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:58 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** From an overworked teacher

My name is Brenda Hommel. I live at 10133 Queens Circle, Ocean City, MD. I have been a teacher for Worcester County for 29 years. I am not able to be at the budget hearing since I am working tonight. With the current cost of living and a salary that has not kept up, I have been working 9 jobs to try to pay my bills and put my son through college without incurring any debt. I work up to 4 jobs in a single day and usually average 93 hours per week. I no longer drive my car to save on gas, so I ride my bike 13 – 20 miles per day to and from work. I will be working at least 5 jobs this summer. My quality of life is lower than it has ever been. I don't know how I can work any harder or any more just to afford to live in Worcester County where the cost of living is so high and the teacher pay is so low. When I graduated from college, Worcester was the county where everyone aspired to work. I am appalled at how the leadership of our county has devalued our education system over the years. We are one of the highest performing counties in the state, yet college graduates do not want nor can afford to teach here. Our teachers are working harder than ever yet we are THE lowest paid county in the state. Our schools are winning championships, graduating top students, and are full of opportunities for students, yet the media is encouraged to focus on the negative to paint an unfavorable picture in the minds of the public. I am confused as to how devaluing our education system will benefit our county. Our county leadership should be fighting to support our schools, our students, and our teachers. It is clear there is a political agenda and smear campaign that is at play in the current budget process and our teachers are the ones paying the price. If the situation does not change, it won't be long before the students, families, and the community at large will also be paying the price for such lack of support for our education system. I appeal to you as county leaders to please do not let our education system continue to slide down such a slippery slope.

Brenda Hommel  
2000 Worcester County Teacher of the Year  
National Board Teacher  
Cross Country/Track Coach  
Stephen Decatur High School  
(410) 641-2171

**From:** Brian Cook <briancookeducator@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2024 7:22 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Comment: FY25 Education Budget

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to share my public comment to be read into the record for Tuesday's FY25 Public Budget Hearing.

Thanks,  
Brian Cook

Dear Commissioners Abbott, Purnell, Fiori, Elder, Bertino, Bunting, and Mitrecic,

As a concerned parent of two Pocomoke-area students and active member of the Worcester County community, I am writing to express my deep concern for the future of our children's education. I urge you to fully fund the Worcester County Public Schools budget for the upcoming fiscal year, recognizing the profound impact that your decision will have on our children, educators, and community at large.

The heart of my concern lies in the need for competitive salaries for our dedicated teachers, educational assistants, and bus drivers. These individuals are on the front lines of education, shaping our future generations. It is crucial that they are compensated fairly to reflect the invaluable work they do, which in turn will help attract and retain quality educators in our county.

Moreover, programs such as a fully funded summer academy and after-school programming are vital for our children's continuous learning and development. These programs not only support academic achievement but also provide safe, structured environments for children when school is not in session, which is incredibly important for working parents like myself.

Keeping class sizes small is vital for effective teaching and learning. It allows for more individualized attention and support from teachers, which is crucial for the academic success of all students, particularly those who may need extra help.

Supporting non- Blueprint initiatives such as fine arts and athletics is essential. These programs do more than complement our children's academic curriculum; they help in developing their social skills, teamwork, and self-expression.

I must stress that not funding the budget and eliminating teaching positions to balance it will lead Worcester County Public Schools down a negative path like never before seen. Such actions would not only diminish the quality of education but would also compromise the future of our children and the overall wellbeing of our community.

As you deliberate on the budget, I implore you to consider these points not just as line items, but as crucial investments in the future of our children and our community. We have an opportunity to make a positive impact on the education system in Worcester County, and it starts with fully funding the school budget.

Thank you for considering my perspective as a parent. I trust you will make decisions that enhance our educational system and support the growth and well-being of all students.

Sincerely,  
Brian Cook

**Karen M. Hammer**

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**From:** Brittany Sudol <sudolbc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 7:53 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget Hearing-Public Education

Brittany Tracy  
58 Cannon Dr.  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

Good evening, I have been a resident of Worcester County for over 15 years. During my tenure in Worcester County, the educational system regarding the public schools has always been a selling point for why people come to Worcester County. As a parent of three Worcester County students, I have been impressed with my children's teachers, the rigor they require, and the love and compassion they show. Since the county has the money, I am at a loss as to why we are not fully funding the budget?! It is not right nor is it fair that my children will go without in their education in the way of larger class sizes and fewer resources because a select few who hold financial power with their own agendas deem it unnecessary. As a taxpayer, mother, and a human who values education, it is beyond me why teachers need to fight for their raises. I was always taught that you do not bite the hand that feeds you. In this case, when you "bite" the teachers in this county by saying they aren't worthy of what they were promised, you are disrespecting those who have devoted their entire lives to educating, loving, encouraging, supporting, listening, and inspiring our children. Most of the educators in our county have numerous degrees and documented post-master's certificates in their respective fields all to improve the educational experience for those they serve. If this is a political ploy, a personal vendetta, or a direct attack on public education, those in charge of making these crucial financial decisions need to be aware of the impacts of their choices on our future...these children of Worcester County. Just a few years back during covid the majority of the public was appreciative and thankful to the teachers after they experienced what they do. How quickly we forget. It is the commissioners responsibility to act on behalf of their constituents. I sincerely hope that all county commissioners vote to reflect a fully funded budget, especially my commissioner, Chip Bertino. There is way more at stake here than egos and vendettas and our children and teachers deserve more; a fully funded budget is a great start. Thank you.

**From:** Carrie A. Moore <CAMoore@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2024 7:15 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget Concerns

Dear Worcester County Commissioners –

I am writing this with the utmost respect for what you do in our community, and I am asking you to acknowledge all that educators do as well. We work tirelessly in our classrooms, in our communities, and for our community members and it is extremely frustrating when we must spend our valuable time advocating for money to fund our already lean budget. You need to take this into consideration when making decisions. Do you want us to be focused on the high-quality education Worcester County is known for and proud of, or do you want us focusing on how we are going to fill the voids left in our schools from budget cuts? I am asking you to consider the ramifications of your decisions and the impact it will have on the children in our community. Vote to properly fund our schools because it is the RIGHT thing to do!!! Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thanks,  
Carrie Moore  
RISE Teacher  
Snow Hill Middle School  
410-632-5240  
Email: camoore@worcesterk12.org

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Catherine McAlister <cmcalister32@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:11 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Fully Fund the WCPS BOE Budget

I am in support of fully funding the budget for Worcester County Public Schools. Good public schools are important to our community. Worcester County has good schools and should receive the financial support to keep their good standing.

Catherine W, McAlister  
142 Pine Forest Dr.  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Chad Vent <ctvent@fawcasson.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:23 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Worcester County Public Schools Budget

I am emailing to express my concerns for anything other than a Fully Funded Budget for the Worcester County Public Schools.

Maintenance of effort will not cut it and will erase what makes Worcester County Public Schools great.

Small class sizes are important.

Don't cut our youth short.  
Stop playing politics and Fund the Budget Fully.  
Thank you

Chad T Vent

Chad Vent, CPA  
Managing Partner, MD Office



9748 Stephen Decatur Hwy. Phone:410-213-8700 X127  
Suite 103 Fax: 410-213-7221  
Ocean City Web: www.fawcasson.com  
MD  
21842



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## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Courtney Bova <cbova929@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:37 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Hearing Comments

From: Courtney Bova  
202 Barbary Coast Dr, Berlin, MD 21811

County Commissioners,

I am writing to you as a graduate of Worcester County Public schools, as a teacher in Worcester County Public Schools and as a parent of three children all of whom attend, or will attend, Worcester County Public Schools.

Teachers have heard that you do not want to hear from us, I do not wish to believe that statement. We have heard that our jobs and our students' futures are not your priority, I also do not wish to believe that. I have watched the various meetings, listening to you comment, question and analyze the budget presented by our Board of Education. I have heard the criticism of lack of oversight and comments on wastefulness- which as an employee, parent and community member I frankly do not see.

What I have not heard is how you expect our board of education to staff and fund our system without drastically altering the course of my job and the educational journey my own children are on if we get a second year of MOE funding. My classes already sit at an average of 23 students, I routinely have at least one class of 30, my building is running out of space and teachers. We have an incoming population of students who missed out on the upper elementary school years due to Covid and need more support than ever before. We are facing years without after school and summer school, classrooms without resources and teachers who are overworked and stretched thin. How are we supposed to do it all?

It seems to me we are at a turning point, a watershed moment and those of you who sit before us now hold the ability to do what is right, to support education and those who need it the most. I know you have seen the signs, watched the rallies and heard from your constituents. Represent the individuals who have elected you and the children who will one day work to elect your successors- I am hopeful you will make the right decision for our entire community and fully fund the budget.

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Daniel M. Braun <DMBraun@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 1:08 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Comment Tuesday May 7  
**Attachments:** Commisoners Comment (1).pdf

Attached are my public comments to be read:

I implore you to fully fund the budget for Worcester County Public Schools. We recognize that several of you believe that you feel WCPS needs to "reimagine" the budget, as Commissioner Bertino stated, but not funding the budget fully would lead to the loss of 90 positions. That cannot be reimagined; that is a fact that has consequences for everyone in Worcester County. Many of you question the spending of WCPS. Spending cuts alone will simply not make up enough to run our schools without having serious consequences felt by students. This isn't an opinion but a mathematical fact. Your desire to micromanage spending and usurp the role of our Board is holding children and teachers hostage.

Commissioners have claimed that you aren't the ones cutting positions but our board decides how that money is spent. However there simply is not enough to cut in the budget to make up the \$9 million shortfall caused by funding us at MOE. Some of you claim teachers deserve to be paid more. However, the only way to pay these teacher salaries that you say they deserve without fully funding the budget would require cutting positions and larger class sizes. Commissioner Fiori claims that he "loves teachers." However, how are you showing you love these teachers by forcing larger class sizes upon them when they are pleading to keep classes small? The only way to both pay the teachers what they deserve and keep classes small is to fully fund the budget.

It is sad that this is the only time you hear from the public given that four of you voted down the right to have public comments at county meetings, making us the only county on the Eastern Shore to not allow this and subsequently besmirching our reputation across the state. It's ironic that some of you voted this way, especially Commissioner Abbott, since you have publicly pleaded, according to your Facebook on March 8 and March 18 for your likeminded constituents to speak at Board of Education meetings. It appears you are more concerned about ensuring the Board of Ed hears from citizens than you are about letting those same citizens speak to you in a public setting.

This groundswell of support that you are seeing will continue to grow if you do not fully fund this budget. The hundreds that marched on the boardwalk will grow to thousands, the "I support public education" signs will spread like wildfire, and the voices you've heard will only get louder. We do this because it's what our students need, what our teachers deserve, and it's your duty to listen to all citizens, not just those that share your views. As Commissioner Abbott said best, "Demand better from your elected officials. We work for you." We, the citizens of Worcester County, are demanding that you work for us and fully fund the WCPS budget.

Daniel M. Braun - 9137 Logtown Road, Berlin, MD 21811  
D.J. Braun  
Teacher

Berlin Intermediate School  
dmbraun@worcesterk12.org

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Catherine McAlister <cmcalister32@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:17 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Fully Fund WCPS BOE Budget

I am in support of full funding for Worcester County Public Schools. My children received a good education in WCPS. My grandson attends currently. Worcester County has good public schools. Full funding is needed to maintain our highly rated schools. Good public schools are important to the health of our community. Educating citizens is a foundation of our democracy. Fully fund the BOE budget.

David B. McAlister  
142 Pine Forest Dr.  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Dawn <woogy32@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 4:40 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** budget hearing comments

As a mother of children who attend SDHS, I am counting on you to make the right choice for my kids. They deserve to have well-educated and well-compensated teachers. They deserve to have small class sizes. They deserve to have all the necessary materials of instruction available to their teachers. They, along with all the other WCPS children, make up the future of our county, our state, and our country.

As a teacher at the elementary level in WCPS, I want to be THAT teacher for my students. I want to give them the best start on their education. That means:

- \*access to materials to teach and enrich the curriculum
- \*access to adapted materials for students with special needs
- \*small class sizes so that all students' needs can be met
- \*full-time social workers and mental health supports in every school
- \*appropriate compensation for all staff that places us on the right track for state-mandated starting salary requirements
- \*guaranteed summer and after-school programs in all schools

Keep Worcester public schools great!

Dawn O'Hara  
59 Moonshell Drive  
Berlin, MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** dsudol@optonline.net  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 12:58 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget

Dawn Sudol  
22 Mallard Dr. East  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

Good evening, I have been a homeowner in Worcester County for over 25 years. As a former educator and a grandmother of three current Worcester County students, I feel it is my right and obligation to address you this evening concerning the public-school budget. This high performing county has some of the best students and educators in Maryland. It is egregious that the focus isn't always on how to give more to that sector, but rather the focus seems to be that they are getting too much or superfluously spending in regard to the executive team. There will NEVER be a time in society where investing in education will not provide an enormous return on investment. This should not even be up for debate. A fully funded budget should be the bare minimum this county provides to the children and educators of Worcester County. To this point, I am extremely disappointed in Chip Bertino for not advocating for the children of this county. I am hopeful that he will vote in favor of a fully funded budget after listening to his constituents tonight. This decision is not a game and should not be taken lightly. The youth of this county deserve a fully funded budget separate from political ploys and personal agendas. If the money is there, the county commissioners have an obligation to the taxpayers, the children, and the educators to fully fund the budget. Thank you.

Karen M. Hammer

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**From:** CHRIS PARSONS <parsons641@comcast.net>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2024 7:17 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Please Fully Fund Worcester County Public Schools

Dear Commissioners,

I have had the pleasure of working at Buckingham Elementary School for the last 23 years. I went through WCPS and so did my daughter. Now my granddaughter is attending. I have always been proud to say I work for Worcester County Schools because we have always been the best. If you do not keep fully funding our budget and only give us MOE again you are going to destroy our school system and many people are going to lose their jobs. Please fully fund our budget to protect our future and our children's future. THEY ARE DEPENDING ON YOU!

Sincerely,

Diane Bishop Parsons  
10527 Woodlawn Rd  
Berlin, MD 21811  
parsons641@comcast.net

Dear County Commissioners,

Two years before our sons were born, my husband and I moved to Worcester County instead of Wicomico or Somerset because of the strong school system. Our two sons are now 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Berlin Intermediate School. One son, Conor, has Down Syndrome and started at Buckingham Elementary when he was 3 years old. Will began in Pre-K 4. Their experiences at Buckingham and Berlin Intermediate have been incredible! They have been 100 percent supported by all the staff and have grown academically and socially. My husband and I agree that their success is because of smaller class sizes where they have had individualized attention when needed. If the Board of Education's FY25 budget is not fully funded, we will lose teachers which in turn will increase class sizes. This will reduce our teachers' ability to provide individualized attention, thus causing our students to not reach their full potential.

In addition to reduced class sizes, not fully funding the budget will greatly impact the Board's ability to provide essential programming and materials of instruction. My sons have greatly benefited from attending after school offerings. This session, they are participating in Kiwanis and making blankets for those at Diakonia. Conor has excelled academically because of his participation since the summer of 2016 in Summer Academy. Without this critical program, he would be even further behind his peers and have not reached his IEP goals. Our schools need the appropriate materials of instruction to ensure all our students achieve success. Without these resources, they will not receive as a robust education.

A fully funded budget will ensure Worcester County remains one of the best school districts in the state! Vote to ensure our students and staff have what they deserve!

Thank you,  
Donna and Tom Pellingier  
345 Walnut Hill Drive  
Berlin, MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Shanana M. Hohl <SMHohl@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 12:23 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Please read at the County Commissioner meeting

Dear County Commissioners,

I am writing in support of a fully funded Board of Education budget. We have two children attending WCPS (with a third to be starting soon) and want them to have the highest quality education possible. This starts with providing proper funding to our school system. We appreciate your attention to this matter and your support of our students, teachers, support staff, and bus drivers.

Thank you,

Edwin Blanco and Shanana Hohl

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**From:** Emily H. Moore <emilyhansonmoore@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 10:09 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Gratitude for WCPS

Dear County Commissioners,

My name is Emily Moore, and I am a resident of Snow Hill, Maryland. I have a six-year-old daughter at Snow Hill Elementary School and a ten-year-old son at Snow Hill Middle School. I am writing to express my gratitude for the important work currently being done in Snow Hill schools and to encourage you all to fully fund the Worcester County Public Schools budget for 2024-2025.

My family moved to Worcester County seven years ago because we wanted our children to attend Worcester County Public Schools. Since then, our experiences with the school system have exceeded our expectations. Even with the events around COVID and all the post-COVID challenges, the educational professionals in my children's schools have risen to the occasion and developed ways to support the needs of our learners and community.

At Snow Hill Elementary, I am particularly appreciative of the rich, well-rounded education my daughter receives from her exceptionally talented first-grade teacher, Dawn Stutzel, who creates such a beautiful learning community in her classroom, and the team of special area teachers at SHES, who nourish my child's mind, body, and spirit. The teachers go above and beyond every day, despite the lack of appreciation they have received lately. My daughter thrives in this environment because of the work of these professional educators. Losing access to any of these areas would devastate her and her classmates.

At Snow Hill Middle School, my son is challenged and supported. He was in first grade when COVID happened, and despite our efforts to support him at home and the hard work of his teachers at the school, he experienced significant challenges to his progress, particularly in reading. His second- and third-grade teachers helped him make progress, but he still entered middle school well below grade level with reading and with difficulty in class with concentration and learning stamina. The past two years at SHMS have been transformative for him. He's excelling in math and in developing his skills as an artist, musician, scientist, and student of history and government. Most impressively, he's reading at the high end of grade-level and is tied for the most reading time of any child in his grade. These changes have been the direct result of the work of educational professionals in the classroom and throughout the school. At SHMS, he is a part of a community of learners who care about their school and each other. This year in particular, I have watched the changes happening under the direction of Matt Record, and I am so pleased to see the progress made and the potential for the coming years. It takes resources to make this kind of change happen, and the most important resource is the people.

I appreciate the support of certain county commissioners. I encourage others to recognize that working against the best interest of our school system is working against the best interest of our community. Please don't compromise the quality of Worcester County Public Schools because of politics. It doesn't matter what affiliations one has; supporting our educators and kids is in everyone's best interest. Let's keep making Worcester County a place people like my family choose!

Sincerely,  
Emily Moore  
Franklin St., Snow Hill, Maryland

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Eric Keay <eric.keay@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:53 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Cc:** eric.keay@me.com  
**Subject:** FY 25 Worcester County Operating Budget

Attn: Worcester County Commissioners.

From: Eric Keay  
34 Cresthaven Drive  
Ocean Pines, MD  
21811

Please accept this into comments for the public hearing on FY 25 Worcester County Operating Budget meeting on May7th, 2024.

I have a concern that the commissioners are not willing to fully fund the Worcester County Board of Education budget. Great teachers, and a well-funded BOE has been foundational in the last two decades of success Worcester County Schools have achieved. With-holding any requested funds from the Worcester County Schools wont achieve the needs of the commissioners nor their constituents. Please fully fund the 2025 budget and support our students and educators.

Regards

Eric Keay.

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Erin Bonner <ebonner228@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 11:31 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Hearing on FY25

My name is Erin Grunden. I live at 1504 Teal Drive, Ocean City, MD. I am writing to you today not just as a special education teacher, but as a voice for our students who rely on us for support, understanding, and opportunities. Nine years ago, I made the conscious decision to join Worcester County's educational community because of the benefits it offered: fair pay, smaller class sizes, and crucial resources for students with disabilities, including vital one-on-one support for those with significant needs.

However, I'm deeply concerned that the landscape has shifted. What once drew educators like myself to Worcester County is now at risk. Our benefits are dwindling, our pay isn't keeping pace with the rising costs of living, and our classrooms are becoming increasingly more crowded. The very resources that were once our pride are now stretched thin, making it harder to meet the diverse needs of our students.

In the face of a national teacher shortage, these challenges become even more urgent. We risk losing experienced educators who have dedicated their lives to shaping the future, and we may struggle to attract new talent to fill the void. Without competitive benefits, fair compensation, and adequate support, the heart of our education system is at risk of faltering.

But let us not dwell solely on the problems; let us instead focus on the solutions. It's within **YOUR** power to prioritize education in our budgetary decisions, to invest in our teachers and students, and to reaffirm our commitment to excellence in education. By allocating resources wisely, by valuing the work of educators, and by prioritizing the needs of our students, we can ensure that Worcester County remains a beacon of opportunity and excellence in education.

I urge you, members of the County Commission, to consider the profound impact of your decisions on the future of our community. Please work with us to uphold the promise of quality education for all, to support our teachers, and to empower our students to reach their fullest potential. Thank you.

Gary Leggour

Ocean Pines, Maryland

As a retiree and member of this community, I write to you today with a plea that resonates deeply with many of my fellow retirees and concerned citizens: let us fully fund the education budget. While my days of active participation in the workforce may be behind me, my commitment to the future of our community remains as strong as ever.

I understand the importance of fiscal responsibility and the need to allocate resources wisely. However, I also recognize that investing in education is not just a financial decision; it is an investment in the very fabric of our society. It is an investment in the future generations who will one day lead our county forward and shape the world we leave behind.

As retirees, many of us have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand the transformative power of education. We have seen how it opens doors, broadens horizons, and empowers individuals to reach their full potential. It is a gift that keeps on giving, enriching not only the lives of those who receive it but the entire community as a whole.

But this gift is under threat. MOE has left our schools struggling to provide the quality education our children deserve. Class sizes are increasing, essential programs are being cut, and teachers are being asked to do more with less. As retirees, we cannot stand idly by and watch as the next generation is deprived of the opportunities, we were fortunate enough to have.

Fully funding the education budget is not just about writing a check; it is about investing in the future prosperity and well-being of our community. It is about ensuring that every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, has access to a quality education that equips them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life.

I urge you, county commissioners, to prioritize education and fully fund the education budget. Let us ensure that our schools have the resources they need to provide a world-class education to every child. Our future depends on it.

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Hayley Westbrook <HRWestbrook@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 1:01 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** I support a fully-funded budget

I wanted to take a moment and express my support of a fully funded budget. This is my 20<sup>th</sup> year teaching for Worcester County Public Schools, and my fourth year as a parent of a child (now children) attending school in this prestigious county. I chose to live and work in Worcester County because of the exceptional school system. When I first began my teaching career in 2004, Worcester County Public Schools had one of the highest starting teacher salaries in the area, and everyone wanted to work here. I felt lucky to snag my dream job right out of college. Unfortunately, that is no longer the case, and many new teachers are looking to start their careers elsewhere, somewhere with better pay, somewhere they can afford to live and work.

I look at my daughters' teachers. The young, newly hired teachers who have to be struggling to make ends meet, but who are devoted to their trade. These teachers work tirelessly to plan and implement creative, thought-provoking lessons that engage my twin six-year-olds on a daily basis. I would love for my children to continue to experience exceptional teaching. To continue to receive a top-notch education from the best teachers; however, I'm afraid of the consequences of not providing a fully funded budget. Eventually, the best teachers, the creative, caring, compassionate teachers, are going to choose to teach where they are compensated and appreciated for their talents.

I support a fully funded budget and hope you will too.

Thank you for your time,

Hayley Westbrook

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** James McGowan <jimmymcgowan1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 2, 2024 9:07 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** County Commissioner meeting May 7th comment

To be read:

Good evening,

This is my second year teaching in Worcester County Public Schools, both spent at Snow Hill Elementary School. This community and this school system have welcomed and accepted my family and me from day one. Before moving to Worcester County I worked in P.G. County for 4 years and Baltimore County for 3 years. This school system is special. It is small but mighty. The test scores help to paint the picture, but it is much more than that. As educators we truly only have one job: To help EVERY student make MEANINGFUL PROGRESS. This school system, more than any other I have been a part of, knows that and makes decisions with that at the forefront. So my question to the commissioner is: *Is this politically motivated budget battle helping students make meaningful progress?*

*As a teacher in this county and as a parent of a student in this county, I hope you can hold that question in the forefront of your thought as you consider the budget and please do what will most help students make meaningful progress, they deserve that and so do we.*

*Thank you.*

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** jamie snyder <jamiesnyder007@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:43 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget meeting

To whom it may concern,

Please accept this letter of my support for a fully funded budget for Worcester county public schools. As a parent of 3 current and 1 former student. A small teacher to student ratio is a priority for my children and for all children in Worcester County. It is imperative that we fund the budget so that our teachers are paid fairly and we are able to employ more staff as needed. At this time of inflation, housing shortages , and rising interest rates my concern is that the educators and staff will not be able to afford the pay shortage. I want the best for my children and the children of Worcester county. This cannot be accomplish without proper funding. Please feel free to reach out to me at anytime.

Kind regards,

Jamie Snyder  
301-751-9511

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** roxy042498@aol.com  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 9:18 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** WCPS budget

I am a Worcester county resident. I pay alot of money to the county in taxes. I have 3 children in the Worcester county public school system. I support a fully funded WCPS budget. I appreciate the tedious examination of the BOE budget but the time has come to move on. The county commissioners need to focus on building new schools and stop hounding the BOE for spending most of its budget on salaries. I don't know if you are aware but the cost of living has dramatically increased yet the county continues to pay the best teachers in the state a mesly salary. Stop knit picking about unimportant things or you will soon find yourselves out of a job. That's not a threat but a fact.

Thank you!  
Janelle Simpson

**From:** Jean Marx <jmarx.timefllys@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 4, 2024 3:34 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Submitting Letter for May 7, 2024 Worcester County Operating Budget Meeting

Dear Worcester County Commissioners:

I am respectfully writing today in support of fully funding the Worcester County Board of Education's (BOE) budget for the upcoming school year of 2024-2025 of \$109.6 million. Per the *Ocean City Today-Dispatch* article dated May 2, 2024, the total county expense budget has been requested at just over \$270 million. Typically, the education budget has been about 50% of the county's total budget. This next year, assuming full funding of the requested education budget, would be just 41%. On top of this, last year the Commissioners rejected the BOE's requested funding, opting to only fund their allocation at the maintenance of effort level. This was a shortfall of many millions of dollars, and as a result, the BOE was only able to accommodate raises at the 1% level, far below the high inflation experienced since 2020.

While discussions have been ongoing this year between the Commissioners and the BOE to try to achieve more transparency on both sides, it is widely rumored that the Commissioners may be in favor of funding the BOE at the maintenance of effort level again. This would be a disastrous course of action for multiple reasons.

The biggest reason is that the teachers, administrators, and support staff have delivered excellent quality results year over year. Worcester County is consistently in the top 5 in the state in scholastic performance, and this is made even more impressive when considering that our county receives the lowest contribution of funding from the state. This would be the second consecutive year where the staff would receive little to no raise. As there is no cushion in a maintenance of effort-level funding, this would absolutely result in a negative impact on salaries, such as furloughs and even up to the elimination of positions. This would cause the best and the brightest of our staff to immediately leave and find other employment. This would be a huge classroom disruption, and more importantly, a huge loss to the children.

Another impact is the detrimental economic impact that would ripple through the county. Our large block of county employees gives back to the county by spending their salaries on housing, child care, food, hospitality, etc. Their lower salary dollars mean less spent in the county's other businesses. Many of our staff have young families and they depend on their salaries to at least keep up with the cost of living. Their financial loss may cause some to move out of the county, and this would exacerbate the negative consequences by resulting in a lower taxable revenue base.

Additionally, since we are being mandated in the state to reach the Maryland Blueprint teacher salaries by July 2026 at \$60,000 for new teachers, why we would stifle our existing teacher salaries now is totally incongruent. Building toward this required salary level will not only better prepare us, but it will improve staff morale which is already flagging greatly. We are not in a recession, nor have we been for the past several years, so we are in a position to fund the budget.

If you were fortunate beneficiaries of our excellent school system with your own children over the years, (this has certainly been the case with my family), you will know that they have consistently delivered for the county. I humbly ask that our school system be compensated at the full funding level. They deserve it along with our gratitude and admiration.

Sincerely,

Jean Marx  
Concerned Berlin Resident

**From:** Jean Marx <jmarx.timeflys@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 4, 2024 3:43 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Re: Adding my address to my Submission Letter for May 7, 2024 Worcester County Operating Budget Meeting

On Sat, May 4, 2024 at 3:34 PM Jean Marx <jmarx.timeflys@gmail.com> wrote:

Jean Marx  
8 Meadow St, Berlin, MD 21811

Dear Worcester County Commissioners:

I am respectfully writing today in support of fully funding the Worcester County Board of Education's (BOE) budget for the upcoming school year of 2024-2025 of \$109.6 million. Per the *Ocean City Today-Dispatch* article dated May 2, 2024, the total county expense budget has been requested at just over \$270 million. Typically, the education budget has been about 50% of the county's total budget. This next year, assuming full funding of the requested education budget, would be just 41%. On top of this, last year the Commissioners rejected the BOE's requested funding, opting to only fund their allocation at the maintenance of effort level. This was a shortfall of many millions of dollars, and as a result, the BOE was only able to accommodate raises at the 1% level, far below the high inflation experienced since 2020.

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Sincerely,

Jean Marx  
Concerned Berlin Resident

**Karen M. Hammer**

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**From:** Jean Marx <kjkpmarx@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 4, 2024 3:50 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Fully fund the BOE Budget Request

I live in Berlin and I request that the Commissioners fully fund the BOE Budget Request.

Worcester County Public Schools consistently rate at the top of Maryland Schools for Academics, Standardized Testing, Athletics, and Extracurriculars. For example SDHS has had 12 State Champions in the Stock Market Game in the last 20 years.

Why jeopardize the successes the school system has had by underfunding it? I could understand if we were in the midst of a terrible recession, but we aren't. The county has the money and should not be short-sighted.

Thank you,

Kurt M. Marx  
8 Meadow St  
Berlin, MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

---

**From:** Jen Kavanagh <jlf7958@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:37 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** For Public Comment, 5/7/24

Good evening Commissioners,

I am writing to you today to request that you fully fund the Worcester County Public School's budget. Two consecutive years of Maintenance of Effort just won't do. Maintenance of Effort does not well serve our students or staff.

I wrote to you in February, and as I did not receive a response, I wanted to quickly reiterate my concerns prior to your vote.

Without an increase of funding we risk the following:

1. Cuts to staffing upwards of NINETY positions
2. Reduced accessibility to materials for instruction
3. Cuts to programming, both enrichment and intervention
4. Frozen staff salaries
5. Reduction of mental health services
6. Continued impacts on field trips, or worse, the elimination thereof

And the list goes on, as I'm sure you're well aware. This list also doesn't account for the increased responsibility of the school system to implement mandated initiatives as designed by Maryland's Blueprint and voted into legislation.

My ask of you is this...please make this decision make sense for the people. Make it make sense for my children, their classmates, and all of the adults that support them. Please do not continue to ask them to "do more with less". And please don't scream that we must make our schools safer by forcing increased class sizes and cutting the programs that help our kids develop into well rounded, productive citizens.

Again, I ask you, please take care of the people.

Jennifer Kavanagh  
33 Greenwood Lane  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Jennifer Lew <rawlsie@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:20 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget hearing

I respectfully request that the County Commissioners fully fund the budget presented by the Board of Education. The citizens of Worcester County rightfully elected the members of the current Board of Education, entrusting them to make the best decisions for our schools. As demonstrated by the numerous public comments during Board meetings, the citizens continue to support their elected representatives. In order to maintain the high level of safety, caliber of instruction, quality of instructional and technological supplies, and resulting achievements that Worcester County has demonstrated over the past generations, the schools require full funding. The economic benefits of a well educated population in addition to appropriately compensated teachers and staff also require a fully funded budget. To reduce the budget to MOE levels again risks the ability of our schools to maintain all of the wonderful things that make Worcester County great. Please fully fund the budget!

Jennifer Lewandowski  
319 Schooner Lane  
Berlin, MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Jessica Emge <jessicalemge@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 1:53 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget Meeting

Hello,

I am writing today to ask that the Commissioner's fully fund the Worcester County School budget for the next year.

As a citizen, I've heard through the grapevine the issues at hand are with the school board - I don't claim to know if that's true or what is behind the potential decision to not fund the budget - I am sure it's a very difficult one to make and I know the commissioners ran on fiscal responsibility and that is something I appreciate very much.

However, if the issue is the school board, I don't think the hardworking teachers and staff should be punished. Nor should the students. One of the many reasons I chose to move my family here was the school system - we came from an area with severe overcrowding and the quality of the school's was diminishing each year, I knew coming here my kids would be in appropriate class sizes and supported fully - and that is exactly what has happened. Both of my children thrive at OCES and I love being at the school and supporting it in any way I can. The teachers and staff are the best of the best and they deserve our support, regardless of what the school has or has not done. Please, please, fund the budget this year and allow our incredible schools to continue being incredible.

And then I fully support tackling the issues at hand so future years can be funded as well.

Thank you,

Jessica Emge

From :  
Juliana Kolasa  
74 Capetown Road  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811  
Written with a group of Teachers at Showell Elementary

Dear County Commissioners,

We respectfully urge you to allocate full funding to the school budget, thereby demonstrating your commitment to the future prosperity of Worcester County. Over the past decade, we have observed a concerning trend of increasing class sizes, teacher attrition, and inadequate support for both educators and students across all grade levels. This has resulted in experienced educators departing for more financially viable opportunities elsewhere, and esteemed colleagues opting for early retirement due to the challenging circumstances affecting their well-being and effectiveness in the classroom.

Persistently advocating for the educational needs of our students amidst such challenges can be exhausting, especially when witnessing the adverse impact of funding shortages on their academic and personal development. The repercussions of underfunding are already evident, and without decisive action, the situation is poised to deteriorate further.

We firmly believe that it is possible to uphold accountability in expenditure while ensuring that our school system receives the necessary resources to thrive. Merely meeting the minimum maintenance of effort is insufficient when the future success of our students is at stake.

Thank you for considering our plea.

Sincerely,

Teachers at Showell Elementary School

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Kate Lutz <kelutz429@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:02 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Comment for Worcester County Public Schools Funding

County Commissioners,

My name is Kate Lutz, and I speak with you today not just as a resident of Worcester County, but as a proud educator who, along with my husband Mike, has dedicated over 19 years of our lives to teaching in Worcester County Public Schools. It has been our dream, our goal, to retire as educators here, to continue contributing to the growth and success of our community. Our commitment to this county runs deep, as evidenced by our children who are thriving students at Showell and Berlin Intermediate, products of the very system we serve.

Yet, despite our dedication and the countless others like us, I am now fearful of the uncertainty in our future. Our concern is that without a fully funded budget, our community, our schools, and our children's futures are at risk. Do we, as educators, as parents, as citizens, face the agonizing decision of seeking opportunities in neighboring counties where the financial strain may not be as burdensome? I have always felt privileged to be a teacher and member of this community, to even contemplate not continuing in Worcester is heartbreaking to me.

The ramifications of underfunding are stark and undeniable. Larger classrooms, dwindling resources, overburdened teachers - these are not mere hypotheticals; they are the stark reality that we face if we fail to adequately invest in our educational system. In 2005, the choice to live and work in Worcester County was clear, it was easy. But today, that choice is clouded by the uncertainty of what the future holds for Worcester County and the well- rounded, high performing public schools that we have worked so hard to create over the years.

Funding only to meet the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) is not enough. It is not enough to sustain the excellence that defines Worcester County. It is not enough to ensure that our children have access to the quality education they deserve. It is not enough to safeguard the future of Worcester County.

I ask of you, our elected county commissioners, to see beyond the numbers, to recognize the **human** cost of underfunding. Fully funding the budget is not just an investment in our schools; it is an investment in the children growing up in our community. I am asking you to make a commitment to fully fund the budget and preserve the greatness our community has worked tirelessly to achieve.

Thank you,

Kate Lutz- 550 Ocean Parkway, Berlin, Maryland 21811

**Karen M. Hammer**

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**From:** Kathy Cater <kxcater1061@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 10:12 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Comment on the Funding of the Worcester County Public School Budget

Dear Commissioners,

I have lived in Worcester County for 33 years and worked as an Administrator for 16 years at Stephen Decatur High School before my retirement in 2021. Our school system has been one of the top performing county's in the country. Maryland is 6th in the nation and Worcester County is 3rd in the state. It cannot stay that way if we can't continue to offer the small class sizes, quality materials of instruction along with instructional experiences, and above all else, qualified teachers.

Your group has made many accusations regarding our Worcester County Board of Education that are highly inaccurate and detrimental to the education of our youth. You have harped on the transparency issue over and over. This is vastly ironic as it is your group who has voted to keep meetings private, and the public from attending. Do not think for a minute this one-off is adequate. If you won't listen to **ALL** the constituents you represent, you cannot understand the needs of our community. This includes many Republicans, as well as Democrats, who are greatly dissatisfied with your processes, and your refusal to fund the Board of Education's proposed budget. It will become very evident at the ballot box if we continue to be ignored.

Maintenance of Effort is not near enough to do the what is needed. Please reconsider your support of the proposed Worcester County Public Education Budget.

Thank for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully,  
Katherine Cater  
33 year Community Member  
Grandparent of Future Student  
Parent of Former Students  
Retired Worcester County Administrator  
Optimist Member

Sent from my iPad

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Keith Tracy <kt7712co@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:14 PM  
**To:** wchearing

Good evening,

As a taxpayer, parent of three Worcester County students and the spouse of a dedicated Worcester County teacher of 14 years, it is my duty to share my thoughts and expectations regarding the public-education budget. I understand that the county currently has the funds to support a fully funded budget, yet I am at a loss for why some of the county commissioners are so against approving something that provides resources for students, pays the teachers, and ensures class sizes stay small so that our students can continue to get the world-class education that we have become accustomed to and that they deserve here in Worcester County.

It is appalling that our teachers are some of the lowest paid in Maryland when they are yielding some of the best results in the state. I know factually that my wife spends her own money each year to fund experiences for her students and invests her heart, energy, money, and time to make sure each of her students are heard, feel valued, learn and grow as productive citizens. It is absurd that she and other dedicated education professionals continually need to divert their energy to fight for the cost of living adjustments and steps that should be a given. It is ridiculous that the commissioners can use personal agendas which ultimately dictate whether my children will be one of 18 in a classroom or one of 30. My sons matter. Their learning matters. It is shameful when a select few elected officials are able to make decisions regarding my children and their education and my wife and her profession. Attacking public education is a direct attack on the future of our country. I hope that those in attendance tonight and who are responsible for this decision make the right choice concerning the budget. Maintenance of effort will insure loss of jobs, a significant decrease in morale, increased class sizes, and lack of resources; just to briefly list some of the negative fallout. A fully funded budget is the only acceptable option.

Thank you,

Keith Tracy

58 Cannon Dr.

Ocean Pines, MD 21811

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Kelly Marx <kellyannmarx@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 2, 2024 12:06 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Commentary on Funding BOE

To the Worcester County Commissioners,

As a daughter of a teacher and graduate of Worcester County Public Schools, I am writing to express my support for fully funding the Worcester County Board of Education in FY 2025. While there are important considerations when balancing a budget that require careful deliberation, there is nothing difficult about deciding whether or not to support children and families in Worcester County.

As a tourist destination with very few options for sustainable year-round employment, WCPS is an incredibly important lifeline for Worcester County families. As of 2023, WCPS employed approximately 1,300 individuals and is one of the largest employers in the area. Opting for maintenance-of-effort funding once again would guarantee the elimination of many of these positions and cause financial catastrophe for families. It will also result in losing qualified education professionals who will leave WCPS and travel to other counties with budgets that reflect the value they place in education. WCPS also serves approximately 6,700 students. Quality public education should be a guarantee, not a privilege to be purchased. The students that will be impacted the most by your decision will be the ones with the least amount of recourse if you turn your backs on them.

As a reminder, Worcester County receives the lowest per pupil state funding contribution of any Maryland county according to the OC Today-Dispatch. When you offer the absolute bare minimum amount of funding required by the state, you send the message to students, teachers, support staff, and their families that they don't matter. That you know better than they do. You may be experts in your own fields of choice, but you are not education professionals. When education professionals tell you that continuing with maintenance-of-effort funding will hurt them, it is not your job to tell them that it won't. Starving students and staff of resources will ultimately negatively impact everyone, yourselves included.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope you have the bravery required to make the right decision for Worcester County children and families.

Kind regards,

Kelly Marx

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Kristina Cosgrove <KLCosgrove@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 11:34 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Thoughts for the Meeting tomorrow

Please feel free to use all or any parts of this commentary I made at a BOE meeting last August:

What is a teacher worth? Everyone seems to have an opinion. As a teacher, but more importantly as the parent of five Worcester County students. I am most interested in the worth of a Worcester County teacher, so I decided to go right to the source. I have collected 14 voices – one from each school – to illustrate the way our children’s teachers go above and beyond. I will not have time to share them all, but here are a few.

Worcester County has a teacher who:

- Dresses up as an old grannie complete with nightgown, rocking chair, and slippers. Teaching characterization while creating a community encourages confidence and risk taking.
- a teacher who encourages sending post cards from vacations, so classmates can learn about the world from each other.
- a teacher who structures classroom projects that create confident kids who fact check information rather than taking it at face value.
- a teacher who transforms “carpet time” into virtual fieldtrip experiences using Smart technology.
- a teacher who uses Peer Buddies to work with younger students on academic and social emotional skills disguised as playing math and reading games
- a teacher who embraces families by distributing class news and school happenings translated in multiple languages
- a teacher who runs (or ran) an After School program where children perform world music from diverse cultures and connect with the community
- A teacher who had 100% pass rate for her students on the AP English Literature and Language test
- teachers who took a group of students to a SkillsUSA National Competition where Worcester County students placed in the top ten in the nation.

I ask you to ask yourself; What is a Worcester county teacher worth? What should it cost to recruit and retain the quality of teachers that we need to shape the future of my children?

This school year I will have a child at Buckingham elementary, two at BIS, one at SDMS, and one at SDHS. Each of them deserves the best. I hope that in the future, my Board of Education will make financial decisions that include a COLA reflecting the current inflation level and impacts lifetime earning and retirement to show our teachers, our students, and our community just how much a Worcester County teacher is really worth.

Kristina Cosgrove,  
English Teacher at Stephen Decatur High School  
2016 Worcester County Teacher of the Year  
Eastern Shore Writing Project Teacher Consultant

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Liz Engh <mslizzy123@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:36 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Worcester County Board Meeting

Dear Worcester County Commissioners,  
Please show your support for a strong public school system, as home owners we believe it is our community's future. We need a school budget that is funded; MOE again will severely negatively impact our schools. The school board deserves your trust and respect, stop trying to micromanage them. We need to come together as a community. Thank you.  
Liz and Darin Engh

Please read and put this statement in the minutes.

Sent from my iPhone

Maggie Berke

Ocean Pines, Maryland

I write to you today with a plea that echoes the sentiments of countless concerned citizens in our community: let us fully fund the education budget. But beyond just allocating resources, I urge each of you to take the time to immerse yourselves in Worcester County Public schools, to witness firsthand the incredible work being done and to understand the critical need for adequate funding.

Our schools are not just buildings where children gather to learn; they are hubs of innovation, compassion, and growth. They are the places where our future leaders, thinkers, and creators are nurtured and empowered. Yet, too often, the challenges they face go unseen and unheard by those who hold the power to effect change.

Fully funding the education budget is not a mere line item in a budget spreadsheet; it is an investment in the future of our community. It is an investment in the dedicated educators, that I have the privilege of working with each day, who pour their hearts and souls into shaping the minds of our youth. It is an investment in the students who deserve access to quality education and the resources necessary to thrive. And it is an investment in the social and economic prosperity of our county.

But to truly grasp the urgency and importance of this investment, we must go beyond the numbers and statistics. We must step into the halls of our schools, sit in classrooms, talk to teachers, and engage with students. We must witness the overcrowded classrooms, the outdated buildings, and the lack of essential resources firsthand. And we must also witness the incredible dedication, creativity, and resilience of our educators and students in the face of these challenges that MOE has created.

By taking the time to get involved within our schools, we not only gain a deeper understanding of the need for funding but also reaffirm our commitment to supporting our education system. We become advocates not just in name but in action, working tirelessly to ensure that every child has access to the education they deserve.

So I urge each of you over the next month while preparing to vote on this budget, you truly do the research necessary to make the right choice, not just on paper or in closed door meetings, but inside the walls of our schools. Together, let us not only meet the needs of our education system but exceed them, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Marie Flood <mariehils16@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 3, 2024 1:00 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Comment On Record

Good afternoon,

Please share the following at the May 7th hearing:

"The children of Worcester County deserve the best. We have the means to make their schooling the best they can receive. What a beautiful idea it would be to use all the funds we have available to support the learning of those who will be the future of this county! Our children deserve small class sizes with well-trained and well-supported teachers. Worcester is renowned in this area for being an excellent school district and I would like us to keep it that way!

Marie Flood"

Thank you!

Marie

Worcester County Commissioners,

Thank you for taking the time to consider my input in your budgetary deliberations. I am a current Worcester County Public Schools employee, working as a systems technician for the I.T. department. This is my fourteenth year of service.

WCPS has come a long way with technology use in the fourteen years I have been here, and I applaud you for supporting us with the gains we have made. However, the more budgetary issues we experience, the more concerned I become. You see, the technology needs of WCPS are growing while the size of our technology-support workforce is not. Consequently, we are having to do more with fewer people which in my view, puts strain on both personnel and infrastructure.

I want to encourage you to fully fund Worcester County Public Schools so that we can continue with the progress we have made and not fall backwards.

Sincerely,  
Mr. Matthew Lee Anderson

9300 Bel Air Dr.  
Mardela Springs, MD  
21837

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Meg Lawrence, and I am a teacher at Stephen Decatur Middle School. I currently live in Berlin, but I am not originally from this area. I moved here after college to live and teach in Worcester County because of the school system's prestigious reputation. Being new to the area, I did not know much about it, but I knew one thing – Worcester County was one of the best school systems on the Eastern Shore, if not all of Maryland. If I was going to move away from home, it was going to be to Worcester County.

For many years, I knew I made the right choice. I met people over the years who had also made the move from “across the bridge” as I had because of the county's reputation. Who wouldn't want to live at the beach and also receive a top-notch education? There is a reason Worcester is so desirable: smaller class sizes, updated curriculum, one-to-one technology, new and updated facilities, teachers who are excited and proud to come to work each day, and most importantly, successful students.

However, a budget funded at maintenance-of-effort diminishes all of that. Class sizes become larger as staff positions are cut to adjust to the cost of living. Curriculum resources and technology become outdated because new ones cannot be purchased. Facilities fall to the wayside. Teachers are forced to work second or even third jobs on nights and weekends to support their families, meaning that their time and energy are divided, and students are not receiving the best education possible. Lastly, students are not as successful and fall behind their peers because programs such as after-school and summer academies are cut. These programs are invaluable to our students but were some of the first on the chopping block this past year.

Maintenance-of-effort is the bare minimum. Our students deserve more. Our teachers deserve more. Our community deserves more. The only way to keep Worcester at the top is to keep raising the standard.

I support my students. I support my fellow teachers. I support my community. I support a fully-funded WCPS budget. Do you?

Meg Lawrence  
146 Intrepid Lane  
Berlin, MD 21811

My name is Megan Cater, I live at 511 Dueling Way, Berlin, MD. Thank you for taking the time to hear from your constituents tonight. I am a special education teacher here in Worcester County and the parent of a future Buckingham student. Like you, I am a public servant. As fellow public servants, we share a common goal: to ensure the well-being and success of our community. It's within this shared commitment that I am writing today, not only as a special education teacher but as a voice for Worcester County students who rely on the quality of their education to navigate the world ahead. Your budget decisions are not merely figures on a spreadsheet; they are the foundation upon which we build the future of our children.

I urge you to consider the critical importance of fully funding the Board of Education's budget. We need full funding to maintain small classes that are imperative for our students with disabilities. I've witnessed firsthand the transformative impact of personalized attention and tailored support. In smaller classes, students receive the individualized instruction they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Small class sizes allow us to create environments where every student can reach their full potential.

But beyond our moral obligation to provide the best possible education for our children, there's also a pragmatic reality that we cannot afford to overlook. By investing in small class sizes, we are investing in the future prosperity of our community. A well-educated workforce drives economic growth, enhances civic engagement, and strengthens the fabric of our society.

As you deliberate on the budget, I implore you to consider the long-term implications of your decision. By fully funding our schools, you will be not only supporting public education; you will be investing in the future prosperity of Worcester County. In contrast, failing to vote in favor of full funding of the Board of Education budget sends a stark message that cannot be ignored. Your actions today will be remembered tomorrow, and your voting record will reflect whether you stood on the side of our children and their education. Thank you for your time and your consideration.

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Melissa A. Powers <MAPowers@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 11:20 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** May 7th public budget hearing

Hello,

Please read the following letter as part of the education section of the May 7th, 2024 budget hearing.

My name is Melissa Powers. I live at 202 Intrepid Lane, Berlin, MD. For 25 years, I have proudly served as a special education teacher here in Worcester County. Throughout those years, I have witnessed our community prioritize the needs of our children above all else. We have always stood together, united in our commitment to provide the best possible education for every student, regardless of their challenges.

However, today, I stand before you with a heavy heart and deep disappointment. It seems that in recent times, your priorities have shifted. Instead of putting our children first, politics and bureaucracy have taken precedence. As a result, your budgetary decisions no longer reflect the values that have defined us as a community for so long.

I implore you to remember why you chose to serve in positions of leadership in the first place – to advocate for those who cannot always advocate for themselves. Our special education students rely on us to provide them with the resources and support they need to thrive. Yet, with each budget cut and political maneuver, we fail them.

I have seen firsthand the incredible progress that can be made when we invest in our children. I have seen the joy on their faces when they achieve something they once thought impossible. But I have also seen the despair when they are denied the tools they need to succeed.

We cannot continue down this path of neglect and indifference. We must recommit ourselves to the principles that have guided us for so long – compassion, empathy, and a steadfast dedication to the well-being of our children.

So I urge you, members of the County Commission, to set aside politics and personal agendas. Let us come together once again, as we have always done, to ensure that every child in Worcester County receives the education they deserve. Our children are counting on us. Let us not fail them.

Thank you,

Melissa Powers

**Melissa Powers**  
**mapowers@worcesterk12.org**  
**Special Education**  
**Berlin Intermediate School**  
**410-632-5320**

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** M. E. Wells-Suznavick <wellssuznavick@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 12:56 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Hearing

Meme Suznavick 401 West Federal Street, Snow Hill, Md. 21863, 443-235-6059

Members of the Commission,

\$10,116,174.00 is the number that has been reported as a shortfall in the budget. Your reserve fund for the county and your reserve fund for Projects would more than cover this short fall.

If it is not important to you to make the county whole, I foresee a force led by concerned citizens who will see that many who have a seat on the Commission will not be here in the next election.

Because of personal vendettas or other obscure reasons you appear to be out to get those who will not bow to you any longer. Having money in the kitty and lowering the tax rate is more important to you than the citizens of our county? That is poor judgement on your part. We need to fund our schools. We need to expand internet coverage to the whole county, we need to pay county workers a fair wage. We need affordable housing and services for those who fill most if not all of our services jobs.

I do not understand your goal of tearing apart our educational system. Who will want to live here? 74% of our educational employees live in our county that you want to cut. Shame on you.

You have an abundance of openings in county jobs because you will not pay a living wage. Shame on you.

Shame on you! Support the county you were elected to serve. Serve the entire county, not just your friends. The turnout of people this night tells you clearly you need to change your current thinking.

Hope some of you like retirement.

I am a county educator, a county homeowner, and ashamed to say I live here with you as my leaders!

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Meredith Russell <mlbenedict@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:59 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Public Comment for the Worcester County Budget Hearing (Education Budget)

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing to ask that you fully fund Worcester County Public Schools. Our public schools are the backbone of a strong, thriving community. Investing in public education is the most important investment that can be made in this community. As a parent of a student in WCPS, I have seen how hard-working, caring and dedicated the teachers and staff in our schools are. Our students and teachers deserve to have a County that invests in them. Funding at the MOE level is underfunding the schools and will result in budget shortfalls and cutting much needed services and programs for our students. Additionally, our schools will not be able to attract new teachers or retain highly qualified teachers if they do not receive competitive salaries due to underfunding. Fully funding the WCPS budget is key to keeping class sizes small, which is extremely important for the success of our students and the effectiveness of our teachers.

I know many families, including mine, that have moved to Worcester County specifically for the great ratings and great reputation of our public schools. Our schools are helping to build the leaders, business owners, doctors, teachers and more of this County for tomorrow. If you want Worcester County to remain a strong and thriving community, you must invest in and fully fund public schools. The consequences of not fully funding our schools will be detrimental to this County, our students, our families, and our teachers and staff. I once again implore you to fully fund WCPS.

Thank you for your time,  
Meredith Russell  
1 Brittany Ln.  
Berlin, MD 21811

As a Nationally Board Certified teacher who resides out of district, I pay for my children to attend Worcester County Public Schools because they are simply the best. But with MOE; larger class sizes, limited access to technology, loss of jobs including support staff and interventionists are all in jeopardy. Sadly, I must take this into consideration as I plan my future at WCPS.

Michelle Colegrove, OCES Teacher  
7250 Lamar Terrace  
Parsonsburg, MD

As a 17 year veteran here in Worcester County, I am asking that you please fully fund the budget. You are hurting our students and their futures

Robyn Diesel, OCES Teacher  
10513 Keyser Point Rd  
Ocean City, MD

Please fully fund the budget. We deserve our raises with the amount of time and effort we put into our jobs daily.

Kathy Huyett, OCES Teacher  
9546 Peerless Rd  
Berlin, MD

Please fully fund the budget. I have never been under so much stress due to this budget crisis. As a non-tenured teacher my position is still in limbo because you will not fully fund the budget. I shouldn't be wondering every day if I will have a job or if I will be moved to a different school. I shouldn't have to wait until the middle of summer to find out where my position will be. I shouldn't have to put a halt on starting a family due to maybe not having a job or raise to afford to live. I shouldn't be wondering why we aren't good enough to be fully funded. I chose to work at Worcester County Public Schools and am proud of that. Please think about our teachers and students when making your decisions.

Mackenzie Roberts, OCES teacher  
8340 Langmaid Rd.  
Newark MD

Please fully fund the budget to maintain smaller class sizes, teacher positions and an increase in salaries. Materials of instruction were cut last year, and I personally spend hundreds of dollars for my classroom and students.

Jen Fohner, OCES Teacher

Dear county commissioners,

If you do not pass the budget, you are not only hurting the hardworking staff, but the students also who depend on those staff members, as well as the community who takes great pride in their local school. You will be doing all of those forementioned community members a great disservice. You will be causing teachers to lose their jobs, you will increase class sizes, which will lead to a decrease in student performance.

Many families, including my own family moved to Worcester County to teach in the top performing county in Maryland as well as have my children attend those schools. I am fearful that if you do not pass the budget, my wife and I will lose our jobs, the school system will fall from the top performing in the state to a mediocre.

If you do not pass the budget you will be hurting many community members and doing a great disservice to a wonderful school system and community.

Brian Mills, OCES Teacher

1457 Ocean Parkway

Berlin, MD

County Commissioners,

MOE is not enough! I have been an employee of Worcester County Public Schools for the last 27 years. I began my career as an Educational Assistant at Ocean City Elementary School. I had the dream of being a teacher one day, so I decided to go back to college and pursue a teaching degree. I continued my full-time job while pursuing my degree. I have been a teacher for the last 21 years.

I am proud to say that I graduated from Stephen Decatur High School. I also graduated from Salisbury University. I stayed here on the Eastern Shore because of the wonderful school system. Worcester County Public Schools were number one!

You have the choice to continue to keep Worcester County Public Schools at the top of your priority list. Fully fund the BOE budget! Our schools, our children, and our community depend on all of you to make the best decision for our future! MOE is not enough!

Thank you!  
Faith Murray  
12013 Sunflower Court  
Bishopville, MD 21813

Please fully fund the budget. Our teachers and staff deserve their raises and to keep their positions. This is causing a lot of stress throughout our schools. Please make the right choice to support our teachers and fully fund the budget for Worcester County.

Sally Ann Messick, OCES EA  
7101 Coastal Hwy #3092  
Ocean City, MD

Please fully fund the budget. As a parent and employee of Worcester County, we need a fully funded budget. My daughter and son deserve small class sizes and teachers who have access to appropriate instructional materials to provide them with the best learning opportunities. Our teachers deserve their raises and positions.

Taylor Kominos, OCES EA  
12415 Salisbury Rd  
Ocean City, MD

Dear County Commissioners,

Please fully fund the budget so the students of Worcester County can continue to thrive and maintain top performance status in Maryland. MOE will certainly NOT accomplish this. Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Burbage  
11716 Turville Lane  
Berlin, MD 21811

My husband and I moved here, from Dorchester County, five years ago because Worcester County Schools were the best in the state. Not only for our kids and the high academics the schools provide, but also because we would be making a significant amount more as teachers. Now this isn't the case! We also chose to move here because my child, who has special needs, has been given the ability to thrive because of his smaller class sizes and the attention his teachers are able to provide him because of this. It would be a shame if students with disabilities were affected even more.

Melanie Coleman  
1513 Teal Drive  
Ocean City, MD 21842

I am writing to ask you to please fully fund the budget. The amount of stress and anxiety this budget crisis has caused to not only me but to every other young, non-tenured teacher in the county is unacceptable. Our time and energy should be spent serving our students. Instead, it has been spent on wondering if we will have a job next year. Wondering if we can afford groceries this week. Wondering if we made the wrong choice coming to Worcester as a new teacher. Wondering why we aren't good enough to be fully funded. Please don't prove us right. If being #1 in the state isn't enough, what is?

Grace Heflin, OCES Teacher  
8 Bridgewater Rd

Investing in public schools is an investment in our future, empowering students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in an ever-changing world. Prioritizing funding for public schools fosters innovation, supports educators, and strengthens communities, driving societal progress and prosperity. MOE is not an enough of an investment for our future, our students' future, or the future of our community.

Kelsey Bettencourt, OCES Teacher  
2813 Plover Drive unit 1D

Please fully fund the budget. As a parent and employee of Worcester County, we need a fully funded budget. My daughter and son deserve small class sizes with highly qualified teachers. Our teachers deserve their raises and positions.

Emma Babcock, OCES Teacher  
12412 Windsor Rd.  
Ocean City, MD

As a Worcester County employee for 22 years and an Ocean Pines resident for 23 years, I am writing to request full funding of the Board of Education budget for the 2024-25 school year. When I first came to this county, we were considered top notch and highly desired in the state of Maryland. Today, we are the lowest paid, which makes it difficult to recruit and retain high level teachers. Additionally, as our workload increases and our health insurance costs increase, our salaries are staying the same. Please help us maintain our high-quality schools by funding us fully! Thank you for your time!

Carol Chrysanthis, OCES Related Services  
18 White Sail Circle  
Ocean Pines, MD

A fully funded educational budget goes beyond just allocating resources to maintenance of effort; it encompasses comprehensive support for all aspects of the educational system. Here's why it's crucial:

1. **Equity in Education:** Fully funding education ensures that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographical location, have access to quality education.
2. **Holistic Development:** Education extends beyond the classroom. Fully funding educational budgets allows for investments in extracurricular activities, arts programs, sports, and other enrichment activities that contribute to the holistic development of students. These experiences are essential for fostering creativity, leadership skills, and teamwork.
3. **Teacher Support and Development:** Teachers are the backbone of the education system. A fully funded budget should include provisions for competitive salaries,

professional development opportunities, and resources for classroom materials. Investing in teachers not only improves retention rates but also enhances the quality of instruction, benefiting students across the board.

4. **Infrastructure and Technology:** Adequate funding is necessary to maintain school facilities, update technology infrastructure, and provide access to modern learning resources. This includes funding for school buildings, libraries, laboratories, and digital learning tools. Investing in infrastructure ensures that students have a conducive environment for learning and access to the latest educational resources.
5. **Research and Innovation:** A fully funded educational budget supports research initiatives and innovation in pedagogy, curriculum development, and educational technology. This investment fosters continuous improvement in the education system, allowing educators to implement evidence-based practices and adapt to changing educational needs.
6. **Global Competitiveness:** In today's knowledge-based economy, communities must invest in education to remain competitive on the global stage. A well-funded educational system produces a skilled workforce, drives innovation, and attracts investment. It lays the foundation for economic growth and prosperity in the long run.

In essence, a fully funded educational budget is essential for creating a thriving, equitable, and future-ready society. It reflects a commitment to investing in the next generation and ensuring that every individual has the opportunity to fulfill their potential and contribute to the greater good.

Catherine Herr, OCES Teacher  
12506 Fleetway Drive  
Ocean City, MD

Please fully fund the budget. Our teachers and staff deserve a fully funded budget to provide the best possible learning environment for our students. The families and children of this county deserve a fully funded budget that will provide the resources and accommodations that all students should have access to.

Sallie Jordan, OCES EA  
10 Footbridge Trail

Full funding for schools is crucial to providing a quality education for all students. It provides important resources that are needed for teachers to create a safe and engaging learning environment. As a teacher my main goal is my students. I want the best for them, and I want to watch them grow and thrive in my classroom. If we do not receive full funding, I know that it will be a struggle for the majority of my students to thrive in larger class sizes.

Beverley Thompson  
9208 Mary Rd  
Berlin MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** anne thawley <amthawley@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 7, 2024 9:00 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Fully Funded BOE Budget

Worcester County Commissioners:

When I first moved to Worcester County, the reputation of the school system was known to be one of the best in the state. Teachers from other counties would wait years for the opportunity to transfer here. When my son entered kindergarten in 2014 the county provided a high quality education, with many students from other counties and states choosing to go here instead of their own districts. The quality of education as my son progressed through Buckingham, BIS and SDMS remained top notch, even as class size grew due to local population growth. At the same time, however, there was an undercurrent of a divide between the county and the Board of Education. Teachers were not getting the steps due them in their contracts and funding was not being allotted for the very things that made the schools here special. Teachers in other counties were no longer seeking to come here, as the county's reputation as an employer and provider of quality education began to slip.

What is now happening within Worcester County is a disgrace. Teachers make or break a child's education. Already they are asked to cover the costs to make ends meet for their classrooms and even for some of the children they teach. Teachers give all they have and more. By not providing the funds necessary for their contracts, what message are you sending? I cannot even fathom the mental state it takes to walk in a classroom each day, dealing with the myriad of problems that their pupils have. Add in the fact that their pay is not matching what the state says it could, and now also facing cuts in the budgets that will reduce or eliminate support positions, after school programs, summer activities, field trips, instruction materials, and even mental health services. Why would teachers choose to stay here?

What is the big picture from not funding our public schools? What are the future costs of not giving all children the best foundation we can? Please consider the long term consequences of choosing not to fully fund the Board of Education. This should not be about who is right or wrong; now is the time to come together to shape the future of students, teachers, and Worcester County. Please consider fully funding the BOE and show the teachers and students of Worcester County that they are valued.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of this pending issue.

Michelle Thawley  
Parent of a SDHS Sophomore  
Berlin, MD

**From:** Peter Marx <pmarxsdhs@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2024 9:53 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Operations budget

To the Worcester County Commissioners' Office,

My name is Peter Marx. I graduated from Stephen Decatur High School in 2016. I highly recommend that the Commissioners' Office fully funds the Worcester County Board of Education going forward. The number of students is increasing and teachers and staff have had to overcome increasing difficulties ever since COVID without an increase in funding. An increase in funding would allow for better education which leads to greater success in the future for the students which subsequently leads to more money spent in Worcester County and overall economic growth.

Thank you for your time.

Peter

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** RAYE SIMPSON <rayesimpson@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:40 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Fwd: Worcester Cty Public School Budget

Please see the email message below.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** RAYE SIMPSON <rayesimpson@aol.com>  
**Date:** May 6, 2024 at 3:27:05 PM EDT  
**To:** commissioners@co.worcester.md.us  
**Cc:** Gwen Lehman <gwenlehman@yahoo.com>, Raye Simpson <rayesimpson@aol.com>, Elena McComas <e.mccomas@verizon.net>  
**Subject:** Worcester Cty Public School Budget

Dear Commissioners

I am a retired teacher of the Worcester County Public Schools here in Maryland, having worked for 44 years at Stephen Decatur High School and in the Adult Education GED Program. It was shocking to learn that the Worcester County teachers receive the lowest beginning salary in the entire state of Maryland. Raising teacher pay is only one of the important issues facing our present Worcester County Board of Education. Also, the new Maryland Blue Print standards for all Maryland schools is very demanding and costly.

I urge all of you, as representative commissioners of all county citizens, to fund the Worcester County Board of Education to the fullest extent. Attracting excellent teachers, school personnel, and providing necessary instructional materials is vital to the welfare of our students. They are our future and deserve the best.

Raye Simpson  
9400 Cropper Island Rd  
Newark MD. 21841  
410-726-3179

Sent from my iPhone

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Raymond Russell <russelrb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:21 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Commissioners Meeting - May 7th - Education Funding

Dear Worcester County Commissioners,

I am writing to express my strong support for fully funding the proposed Board of Education budget for Worcester County. As a parent, resident and member of this community, I believe that investing in our public education system is not only essential but also critical for the prosperity and future success of our county.

The public education system plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of Worcester County. It serves as the cornerstone of our community, providing foundational knowledge and skills to our children, preparing them to become active and engaged citizens. Moreover, a strong public education system attracts businesses, families, and investment to our county, contributing to its overall economic prosperity.

Teachers are the heart and soul of our schools, tirelessly dedicating themselves to educating and nurturing the next generation. Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers has become increasingly challenging. Fully funding the Board of Education budget would enable us to attract and retain top talent, ensuring that our students receive the quality education they deserve.

I urge you to prioritize education funding and fully support the proposed Board of Education budget. By doing so, we are not only investing in the academic success of our students but also securing the future prosperity of Worcester County.

Thank you for considering my perspective on this crucial matter. I look forward to your support in fully funding the education budget and continuing to strengthen our public education system.

Sincerely,

Raymond Russell

1 Brittany Ln.

Berlin, MD 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Richard Taylor <richardptaylor64a@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 3:31 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Cc:** commissioners  
**Subject:** Funding the BOE budget

Good Afternoon County Commissioners,

I'm reaching out to stress the importance of fully funding Worcester County Public Schools. Our schools are critical to our community, and adequate investment is vital. It is critical that you fully fund the Board Of Education Budget.

As someone who's seen the dedication of our teachers and staff firsthand, I understand the necessity of proper funding. Underfunding at the MOE level risks cuts to essential services and hinders our ability to retain top-tier educators.

Small class sizes are crucial for student success, and our schools attract families to Worcester County. Let's ensure our community remains strong by prioritizing and fully funding our public schools.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Richard P. Taylor

1210 Market Street, Pocomoke, MD 21851



The Jesse Klump Memorial Fund, Inc.  
P.O. Box 1786 · Berlin, Maryland 21811  
667.227.9247 · [www.jessespaddle.org](http://www.jessespaddle.org) · [weremember@jessespaddle.org](mailto:weremember@jessespaddle.org)

May 1, 2024

To our Friends on the Worcester County Commission,

Please accept my apology for not being able to speak in person this year, and accept our gratitude for the many years which the Commission has chosen to support the suicide prevention mission of the Jesse Klump Memorial Fund.

Everyone on the Commission is familiar with the work that we do on the lower Eastern Shore, as reflected by your past generosity. For the coming fiscal year we have requested a grant of \$5000. This will enable us to launch and expand a new program: a Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) Team. The LOSS Team is modelled after other teams in place nationally, and serves those families and loved ones left behind after a suicide.

Our President, Kim Klump, has hosted monthly support groups for survivors of suicide loss since early 2011. She trained with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention as a grief counselor, and is assisted by a member of the Worcester County Health Department's Crisis Response Team. Kim is the coordinator of the LOSS Team, and has already enlisted 12 volunteers to act as outreach representatives.

Newly bereaved family members are often at a loss themselves after a suicide death. Their odds of making an attempt on their own lives are magnified. They are faced with an unimaginable kind of grief, complicated by its unexpectedness, and factors emotional, financial, and logistical. They feel alone, as if no one else has ever experienced such a devastating loss. Members of the LOSS Team have all been there, and their role is to reach out with the message "I know how you feel, I lost someone to suicide, too." Team members will be prepared with connections to resources that address every issue bereaved folks may have, gently and compassionately.

Financial Support  
provided by the  
**Humphreys Foundation**  
Ocean City MD



The *Jesse Klump Memorial Fund*, a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit corporation, exists to end the tragedy of suicide, to provide a place of healing for those who have lost loved ones to suicide, to financially support scholars of any age who have demonstrated a desire to make the world a better place through original, entrepreneurial community action, and to provide grants for training for healthcare and education professionals dedicated to suicide prevention and mental health.

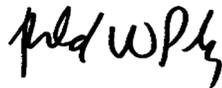
**ARE YOU CONSIDERING SUICIDE? WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE? DON'T WAIT CALL 988**

We have met with the Worcester County Sheriff and the State's Attorney to craft a plan by which the LOSS Team can be connected to survivors in a noninvasive fashion. Both have offered their enthusiastic support, and a Memo of Understanding is in the works. Team members will not be on the scene of a suicide, and will not interfere with subsequent investigations by law enforcement. It is not our intention to be intrusive, nor is it our intention to force our services on those grieving. Often, just learning that someone has shared their experience and is there to listen is a door that opens to hope.

The LOSS Team is partially financed by a grant from the Everytown Foundation, a grant that requires matching funds. The generosity of the Commissioners Will be a huge help toward making the LOSS Team effective, saving the lives of your neighbors.

Thank you for considering our application. We know that there are many worthy nonprofits in Worcester County (we work as partners with many of them) and that your decision is difficult. Simply your consideration affirms the importance of our work.

Sincerely,



Ronald W. Pilling, Corresponding Secretary

Financial Support  
provided by the  
**Humphreys Foundation**  
Ocean City MD



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**ARE YOU CONSIDERING SUICIDE? WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE? DON'T WAIT CALL 988**

Financial Support  
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**ARE YOU CONSIDERING SUICIDE? WORRIED ABOUT SOMEONE? DON'T WAIT CALL 988**

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Samara Trump <samarartrump@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 9:25 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget Hearing- Public Education

Samara Trump  
255 Ocean Pkwy, Ocean Pines, MD 21811

My name is Samara Trump, and I am a Junior student at Stephan Decatur High School. Since coming to this school, my education has greatly expanded, and I am grateful for the opportunities I have been given. I and many others from this district want and deserve a fully funded education. From a firsthand educational perspective, I promise you teachers are not teaching the inappropriate things you may think. Choosing to hold back your funds on young mind's education just based off of false assumptions and things taken out of context is just wrong and quite frankly embarrassing for you. I sincerely hope you do the right thing for my education and many more young minds in the future. Thankyou for your time.

**From:** Sandee Sharp <cshell21811@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 4, 2024 7:23 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** County Commissioners - Public School Budget

Sandra Sharp  
16 Serf Place  
Ocean Pines, MD 21811

Dear County Commissioners,

As a grandparent who has had the privilege of raising children within our school system and now witnessing my grandchildren start on their educational journey, I feel compelled to speak up for the future of our community.

I've seen firsthand the incredible impact that a quality education can have on a child's life. It's not just about grades and test scores; it's about nurturing their curiosity, fostering their talents, and preparing them for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

But I've also seen the strain that our schools are soon to be under due to insufficient funding. If Maintenance of Effort funding becomes the norm, class sizes will increase, resources will become more scarce and outdated and programs like after school and summer academies, helping students who need it the most, will become a thing of the past. It breaks my heart to see our children facing these obstacles.

We owe it to them to do better. We owe it to them to provide the support and resources they need to thrive. That means fully funding our education budget so that every child has access to a high-quality education, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Investing in education isn't just an investment in our children; it's an investment in the future of our community. It's about ensuring that we have a skilled workforce, a vibrant economy, and a society where every individual has the opportunity to succeed.

So I urge you, as stewards of our county's resources, to prioritize education funding in your budget decisions. Our children and grandchildren are counting on us to give them the best possible start in life. Let's not let them down.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sandra Sharp

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Sara E. Patrick <SEPatrick@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 2, 2024 11:33 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Cc:** Shannon R. Bone  
**Subject:** County Commissioners Public Meeting

As a teacher, I am privileged to witness the incredible potential within each and every student who walks through our school doors. However, I cannot ignore the stark reality that Worcester County public schools are facing tremendous challenges, largely due to inadequate funding.

Teaching is more than just a job for me; it's a calling—a calling to inspire, empower, and nurture the minds of the next generation. But how can I fulfill this calling when I'm constantly forced to do more with less? It is a disgrace that the majority of teachers and educational assistants MUST work multiple jobs in order to pay their bills and care for their own families. We are the wealthiest county in the state of Maryland with the lowest starting wages for teachers.

You cannot compare smaller schools, like Pocomoke and Snow Hill, with Stephen Decatur. You cannot make funding decisions by averaging the whole county and lumping their needs into one basket. Statistics must have context. You must do the work and research to understand what those statistics mean. Worcester County has one of the largest spending per student in the state. The reason for this is not that we are overspending. It is based on the fact that we receive the least amount of state funding for our schools. The spending per student is calculated with only the money from the counties and excluding the financial assistance from grants or from the state.

I reach out to you today not just as a teacher, but as an advocate for change. We cannot continue to ignore the critical need for better funding for our public schools. Our students deserve better than crumbling infrastructure, outdated resources, and overworked educators.

Investing in our public school system is an investment in the future of our society. It's an investment in the dreams and aspirations of our students, and it's an investment in the prosperity of our community.

We must come together to demand better for our students. We must urge our elected officials to prioritize education in their budget allocations. We must fight for smaller class sizes, competitive salaries for teachers, and comprehensive support services for our students.

As a teacher, I am committed to doing everything in my power to provide the best possible education for my students. But I cannot do it alone. I need your support. Our students need your support.

Together, let us stand up for our public schools and ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a high-quality education. Thank you.

Sara Patrick



**Karen M. Hammer**

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**From:** Mike & Susan Costanzo <paws3sj@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 6:00 AM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** FY25 Budget for Worcester County Public Schools

Commissioners,

I urge you to fully fund the Worcester County Board of Education budget for the upcoming year. Low class sizes and equity in programs are dependent upon the amount of money the school system receives. We are definitely falling behind other counties in Maryland with the services we can provide. It is imperative that the Board of Education have an operating budget that will not only support all our programs, but also enhance them.

As a citizen, tax payer and voter of Worcester County, I support a fully funded educational budget!

Susan T. Costanzo  
6 Crows Nest Lane  
Berlin, Md 21811

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Tammy Gonzalez <saltyseasider@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 2:10 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Comments for Commissioners' Meeting 5/7/24

Tammy Gonzalez  
16034 Metompink Rd.  
Bloxom, VA 23308  
English as a Second Language (Multilingual Learner) Teacher  
Pocomoke Middle & High Schools

Thank you, commissioners, for allowing me to submit my comments despite being unable to attend this evening.

This is my twenty-first year as a teacher in Worcester County. I taught Language Arts my first four years and have taught English as a Second Language since. Prior to coming to Worcester County, I taught for seven years in Accomack County and was one of eight finalists for the state of Virginia Teacher of the Year during my last year there. As a native and resident of Accomack, I hope to share an “outsider’s” perspective that will, hopefully, resonate with you.

After deciding to stay on the Delmarva Peninsula, I sought employment in Worcester County because it was the gold standard in teacher salaries on the Eastern Shore at that time. If you look at the number of employees who were hired from Accomack County in the early 2000’s, you will see that many teachers recognized this.

I urge you to notice and acknowledge that we are now beginning to feel the same rumblings of attrition amongst Worcester educators that I once witnessed in Accomack. Teachers are talking about other counties' salary scales; newer hires are deciding if the demands of the job are worth the pay; and fewer teacher interns are in our schools compared to fifteen years ago. Accomack still deals with significant shortages due to teacher attrition despite having increased salaries significantly over the past several years; I expect the same fate will befall Worcester if you do not take action to re-establish Worcester as the highest-paying school district in Maryland. You do not want Worcester to be in the position of playing “catch-up” like your southern neighbor.

Finally, I’d like to encourage the elected officials of Worcester County to demonstrate professional decorum in their interactions with one another and with the public on social media. The incessant bickering, one-upmanship, and tension have unnecessarily demoralized this county’s educators more than you know.

Thank you.

Tammy Gonzalez

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Tom Simon <bobweirisajedi@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 12:10 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Comments to be read into public record

Worcester County Commissioners,

As a father of a Pre-K 4 student at Buckingham, with hopes that my youngest will attend Pre-K 3 there next year, I am writing to passionately advocate for the full funding of our public school system. Specifically, I urge you to prioritize keeping class sizes low and raising teacher salaries. This investment is not just about numbers; it's about the future of our community and the well-being of our children.

Research consistently demonstrates the significant impact of small class sizes on student achievement. A landmark study by the Tennessee STAR project found that students in smaller classes in the early grades showed higher academic performance, increased engagement, and better long-term outcomes compared to their peers in larger classes. Similarly, a meta-analysis by the National Education Policy Center concluded that smaller class sizes have a positive effect on student learning across all grade levels, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Furthermore, investing in our teachers is crucial for maintaining a high-quality education system. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that increasing teacher wages not only attracts and retains high-quality educators but also improves student outcomes. When teachers are paid competitively, they are more likely to stay in the profession, leading to greater continuity and stability in our schools. Additionally, a report by the Economic Policy Institute highlights the economic benefits of raising teacher salaries, as it stimulates local economies and strengthens the middle class.

I also want to emphasize that the students and teachers at Buckingham deserve a new school equal to the facilities at Showell Elementary School and Ocean City Elementary School. Ensuring equitable facilities across our district is essential for providing every child with a conducive learning environment.

By fully funding our public schools and prioritizing small class sizes, competitive teacher salaries, and equitable facilities, we are investing in the success and prosperity of Worcester County. I urge you to vote for fully funding Worcester County Public Schools.

Tom Simon

8 Baker St.

Berlin, MD

21811

## Megan Coffey

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**From:** Tony <tonyweeg@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 12:40 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Letter to be read : Tony Weeg for meeting on 5/7/2024

Hello, and please read this into the record for me.

"To the Commissioners on Public Education

I'd first like to congratulate the commissioners in favor of last years MOE for starting a movement.

Your votes united a lot of worcester county voters under a great cause. Across party lines and district lines we have come together for one mission. A fully funded budget, a school system that is the priority, and a sense of partnership with the Board of Education.

Our school system is what it is because your forefathers in those seats stood on their business and knew the importance of a fully funded school budget.

Our family moved here six short years ago rather than sending our children to private schools, we chose Worcester County - squarely because of the aforementioned reputation and actuality that is Worcester County Public Schools.

I implore you to look past and get over your political and dogmatic beliefs and fund the budget.

I also implore you to BUILD THE BEAR - and come in where the state will not and fund the school that the Berlin neighborhoods deserve.

Good day to you all."

thank you, Tony Weeg

302 bay st berlin md 21811

Sent from Gmail Mobile on my iPhone. Don't hate.

**Karen M. Hammer**

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**From:** Zach Bova <zachbova@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2024 5:33 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Budget Hearing Comments

Zach Bova  
202 Barbary Coast Dr, Berlin, MD 21811

Good evening,

I'm writing today as a parent, just like many of you, to talk about something that's close to my heart: our kids' education. It is no secret that our schools need more support, the banners, signs and rallies show this is what our community is demanding. When we skimp on funding, we're shortchanging our future and we will see the impacts of that for years to come.

Think about it. Education isn't just about reading, writing, and arithmetic as some would have you believe. It's about giving our kids the tools they need to succeed in life. It's about sparking their curiosity, nurturing their talents, and preparing them for whatever comes their way in an ever changing world.

But when our schools are strapped for cash, it's our kids who suffer. They end up in overcrowded classrooms, with outdated books, and teachers who are stretched thin. And that's not fair to them or to the communities they will one day serve.

We need to step up and make sure our schools have the resources they need. That means more money for things like smaller class sizes, updated textbooks, and programs like art and music that help our kids thrive.

Because here's the thing: when we invest in education, we're investing in the future. We're giving our kids the chance to reach their full potential and make their mark on the world.

So let's not wait any longer. Let's come together and demand a fully funded budget for our education system. Our kids deserve nothing less.

Thanks for listening.

Zach

## **Megan Coffey**

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**From:** Zena L. Tunnell <ZLTunnell@worcesterk12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, May 6, 2024 1:52 PM  
**To:** wchearing  
**Subject:** Letter to County Commissioners

Dear County Commissioners,

I am writing to you today with a deep sense of urgency and concern regarding the upcoming decision on the Board of Education budget. As a teacher of this community deeply invested in the welfare and future of our students, I implore you to give your full support to the Board of Education budget proposal.

The proposed budget submitted by the Board of Education is not just a list of numbers; it is a lifeline for our schools. Investing in education is not just a financial decision; it is an investment in the future of our community.

Every child in our county deserves the chance to receive a high-quality education, regardless of their background or circumstances. By supporting the Board of Education budget, you are not just supporting schools. You are investing in the promise and potential of every child in our community. You are investing in the next generation of leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers who will help shape the future of our county. You are investing in high quality educators. You are investing in Worcester County continuing to be the best county in the state of Maryland.

I urge you to stand with our students, families, and staff by giving your full support to the Board of Education budget. By not supporting the budget, you are limiting the resources our students receive for the strongest impact on their learning. You are affecting the livelihood of the hundreds of teachers, instructional assistants, cafeteria workers, etc. who are relying on the passing of the school budget to somewhat live comfortably with the rise in inflation and insurance costs.

Thank you for your attention on this critical issue, and please know that your decision will have a profound impact on the future of our community.

Sincerely,

Zena Tunnell  
Special Education Teacher at Stephen Decatur High School

1302 Aspen Drive  
Salisbury, MD 21804

*Zena Tunnell*  
*Special Education Teacher*  
*Stephen Decatur High*