

Investment in Early Childhood Education (Board Member Dottery Butler-Washington)

Good evening. I am Dottery Butler-Washington, member of the Board of Education of Charles County.

I am here this evening to thank the members of the Board of Charles County Commissioners for their continued support of public education. I also want to highlight for you an important area of the Charles County Public Schools Fiscal Year 2025 budget request.

Charles County Public Schools continues its investments in providing more students with access to high quality early childhood education programs. In the budget request, the school system is asking for funding to support the opening of a second Early Learning Center. This one will be in Waldorf. The opening of this second Early Learning Center will provide more support for our prekindergarten program and our most impacted students. With the additional funding, the school system plans to serve an additional 155 three-and four-year-olds in our prekindergarten program.

As the Commissioners are aware, expanding early learning opportunities for students is not only highlighted in the Charles County Public Schools strategic plan, but is also detailed at length in Pillar 1 of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future education reform law.

The investments by Charles County Public Schools into early childhood education are resulting in positive academic and personal gains for students. According to the most recent Kindergarten

Readiness Assessment (KRA) data, the school system for the third consecutive year is seeing an increase in the number of students demonstrating readiness for kindergarten. This percentage has increased from 36% to 41% of students demonstrating full readiness for kindergarten. This is a result of these students having access to a quality early childhood experience – it directly impacts the future of students. These students also tend to perform better on assessments than their peers as they move through elementary and middle school.

Currently, only 45% of Charles County Public Schools kindergarten students were able to participate in a prekindergarten program prior to starting kindergarten. With the support of our fiscal year 2025 budget request, Charles County Public Schools would be able to provide more students with a high-quality prekindergarten program experience and prepare additional students to transition into kindergarten, ready to learn, grow and thrive.

Please help us expand a high-quality early learning experience to additional students by supporting the school system's fiscal year 2025 budget request. On behalf of the Board of Education of Charles County and Charles County Public Schools, I urge the Board of Charles County Commissioners to fully fund our fiscal year 2025 budget request so that we can continue to support all children in Charles County. Thank you.