

Providing targeted interventions that help students meet their potential, learn and thrive

(Board Member Jamila Smith)

Good evening. I am Jamila Smith, member of the Board of Education of Charles County.

I am here tonight 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 a critical area of the Charles County Public Schools Fiscal Year 2025 budget request – targeted student interventions and supports that help students learn, grow and achieve.

Charles County Public Schools is very proud to serve a vibrant and growing English learner population that today is just over 1,300 students. In recent years, the ESOL teacher to ESOL student caseload ratio has grown to 49 to one. That is 49 English learner students assigned to one ESOL teacher. One teacher who meets regularly with the classroom teachers of 49 students to plan effective lessons and instruction.

Part of the fiscal year 2025 budget request is additional staffing to support our growing English learners. It is a goal of Charles County Public Schools to reduce that caseload to 35 students to one teacher by bringing more teachers with second language acquisition expertise to our school system. Also, the budget request includes instructional program materials previously purchased by Covid relief to continue to support our students.

Another priority in our budget is identifying students early on that need targeted, evidence-based interventions to support their learning. The FY2025 budget requests additional staff for the Child Find process. Child Find is a process designed to locate, identify and refer young children who

need targeted services. If eligible, services for children birth through age five are offered through the Charles County Public Schools Infants and Toddlers Program and through special education prekindergarten program placement. These early interventions are critical to the success of an effective transition into kindergarten and beyond.

If the fiscal year 2025 budget request is not funded, Charles County Public Schools stands to lose instructional resources that directly support the interventions students need to succeed in schools. Some examples include Numbers World which provides support for middle school students in mathematics. Additionally, The Wilson Reading program and Language Live! are used currently to support students in elementary and middle school in reading.

We are proud to provide evidence-based supports to help our students strengthen their reading and mathematics skills. Without the funding to support these interventions, we would lose our ability to reach students who are most in need of extra help. We would be losing resources that currently support those students who are most in need.

While one could argue there are other areas in the budget request that could be modified to support targeted resources necessary for students, the school system needs every identified dollar to support educating the needs of every child. There is no simple solution or easy cut when we are looking at helping children learn, thrive and grow.

By supporting the school system's fiscal year 2025 budget request, you are helping support targeted interventions for students who need them most and also supporting the staff who implement them. 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.

