

**State of the Youth in Charles County Public Schools (Yonelle Moore Lee, Esq., Board Chairperson)**

Good evening. I am Yonelle Moore Lee, chairperson 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 share with the Commissioners, as well as the viewing public, some important highlights about the current state of youth in Charles County Public Schools.

Charles County Public Schools proudly educates more than 28,000 students daily across 38 schools and four educational centers. As Charles County grows, so does the number of students we educate each year. Charles County has experienced rapid growth in its population, economy, and wealth. While overall there is more prosperity in the county, our children are collectively experiencing greater challenges that require additional resources to support their learning and achievement.

In fact, when it comes to young people, the percentage of Charles County Public Schools students impacted by poverty has increased from 33% in 2013 to an estimated 49% for this upcoming school year. This is a 16% increase in just 11 years.

Additionally, our school system now supports more acute needs of students. For example, in Fall 2012, Charles County Public Schools educated approximately 200 students identified as English learners. Today, the school system proudly serves more than 1,300 English learners. Additionally, our students needing special education and other services has increased. In 2012, the school system provided such supports to about 2,500 students. Currently we educate well over 4,600 students with an Individualized Education Plan and with other services.

After the full return of students to in-person learning following the pandemic, the school system has also expanded behavioral health services for many of our students. Meeting the needs of all students is what we do to ensure they are learning, thriving and ready to graduate. As Charles County grows, so does our responsibility to provide a high-quality education, academic and personal supports, and opportunities for every child who steps foot into our schools. And we know that when we give students the supports they need, they meet with success and thrive.

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.