

Good Evening, my name is Veronica Golden and I reside at 3172 Eutaw Forest Drive Waldorf. I am the Vice President and Government Relations Committee Chair of the Education Association of Charles County. I am also the proud art teacher at Gale-Bailey and mom to Jonah, who be entering kindergarten next year.

I am tired. I have been coming before the County Commissioners for over 10 years to ask the board to do right by our school system, to prioritize our children's needs. I am tired of asking, but that exhaustion does not mean that I am giving up the fight. I am here to remind you of the campaign promises that ALL of you made to make sure the Blueprint for Maryland's Future was a funding priority. Yet when presented with an aggressive budget that did just that, Charles County Public Schools received a slap in the face with the budget request being underfunded by 60%.

I am a realist and understand that the initial request was never going to be fully funded but, while the allocated funding is over Maintenance of Effort, it does not begin to cover the increased needs of our students. Increased behavioral and social-emotional needs, special education, students who are English Language learners, and students in poverty. All of you have children and even grandchildren, many of whom attend or have attended Charles County Public Schools, do you really want them to receive an education that is about doing more with less?

CCBOE needs an additional minimum \$5 million to meet the unmet needs your budget proposal shortchanges. This money would allow for the continuation of the work that has already been started on Blueprint Implementation, such as community schools, expanded pre-k, and CTE opportunities. It is also necessary funding to support critically needed student mental and behavioral health initiatives as well as expanding opportunities for secondary students through after-school athletics and clubs.

It is not new news that we are in an educator crisis, a crisis that is only going to get worse, because one of the main reasons educators are leaving the profession in mass exodus is because of student behavior. It is no secret that students are coming to school with more

trauma and are exhibiting more aggressive behavior. Not providing appropriate funding puts additional strain on our administrators, counselors, school psychologists, and PPW's which continues the vicious cycle we find ourselves in today. The additional requested \$5 million over what has been allocated will allow these educators to work proactively instead of reactionary to student behavior to create safe environments to learn and work.

We as a community need to do better by our kids. You, as our elected officials, have the obligation to be the example in how to lead and take care of each other. This is your chance to do right, to put aside your differences, to prove that you have our future, our children's, best interest at heart. I do not accept the response that there is no money, not when every year allocated funding for Charles County Public Schools has dropped. In 2006 when I began teaching that funding was over 50% of the county budget, it is not 41.3 percent, sad thing for the largest county employer. Be the difference. FIND. THE. MONEY.