

## Charles County Commissioners Budget Hearing Remarks

My first budget in Charles County takes me back to FY11. That cycle, 48% of the county budget went to the CCPS. By FY22, that dropped to 44.5% of the budget. Now in FY25, we are slotted for just 41.3% of the budget. In my time with CCPS, our share of the county budget has dropped nearly 7%. In FY25 dollars, that would be 39,182,024 additional dollars to CCPS if the County Government just funded us at the FY11 level.

While our share of the county budget has decreased, let's talk about how CCPS has grown. Enrollment is up, our special ed population has exploded, our ESOL population increases almost weekly, we've opened new schools, are building another, renovated multiple schools, expanded CTE programs, expanded from a K-12 to a Pre-K-Early College school system, met stakeholder needs through a worldwide pandemic, implemented summer programs and interventions to make up student learning loss, expanded student mental health and behavior supports, expanded extracurricular activities, and created community schools often providing wrap around services to students and their families, while also meeting every Blueprint deadline. That is by no means a comprehensive list. All while receiving a smaller and smaller % of the county budget each fiscal year.

I'm not here to only blame you. CCPS played a part. We had our Hill and Holstein era. They weren't open and transparent with their budget requests and were often deceptive around our fund balance. They also did little to foster cooperation with county government, and CCPS suffered. Well, they are gone, and it's been a new era for CCPS. Dr. Navarro couldn't be more open or transparent with her budgets and our fund balance, providing a near line-by-line explanation of budget items and program goals. The new BoE has also worked hard to be a true partner with county government. We all want to be one team with one goal. Despite this new era of CCPS leadership, our share of the county budget has continued to shrink.

We didn't lose 7% of the budget overnight, and we can't expect it back all at once, but the time to start is now. By giving CCPS just an additional 1% of this year's budget, Dr. Navarro can meet all Blueprint requirements, hire more mental health and behavior specialists to help our students in most need, and fund more after-school activities and clubs to keep our students busy and engaged in their school community. We have done so much, all with a smaller and smaller % of the budget, but it can't continue. Let's partner together and begin anew. We need your help. We can't keep doing more with less. We've "made it work" for far too long. We need the county government to step up.