

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF WICOMICO COUNTY



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Delegate Carl L. Anderton, Jr.
House Office Building, Room 310
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Anderton, Jr.,

This letter is written to express our strong opposition to the proposed change to the State Education Article on Budget/Reporting requirements for the Wicomico County Board of Education. The proposed legislation lacks merit and would result in redundancy of efforts.

This proposed amendment would require the Wicomico County Board of Education to submit to the Wicomico County Council on or before November 1 and March 1 of each fiscal year a report detailing all expenditures within the major categories of its annual budget. The proposed amendment was introduced with the rationale that it is simply “housekeeping”. It was explained that this amendment is needed based upon the fact that Wicomico County now has a County Executive form of government, and every other system with this form of government has this additional language in the law. While it is true that the five systems that have additional, but varying, language in the law, all have a County Executive form of government, four other systems each have this form of government with no additional reporting requirement. We have been unable to find a connection between this additional reporting and a County Executive form of government and question the rationale that this legislation is simply “housekeeping”.

It appears that at least one Council member believes this amendment is necessary based upon a lack of transparency, as we were asked why we would oppose transparency. We don't. We understand the need for this level of transparency with the County Government and our citizens and have gone above and beyond basic information reporting to provide great detail in financial reporting to our community. Transparent reports are already available on our Board of Education Transparency Portal. In fact, monthly detailed reports are posted and include every expenditure made by the school system. Legislation isn't necessary to receive this information. It is readily available on our website. For your convenience, you can view our detailed reporting through this link [Business Support Services / Monthly Financial Reports \(wcboe.org\)](#).

The amendment would also require the report to show any action by the Board of Education that would permit the Board of Education to spend more in any major category than what was approved in the annual budget for that category. As you well know, this requirement is already stipulated in the law under Education Article 5-105, requiring a county board to “*submit to the county governing body a report within 15 days after the end of each month if during that month the county board takes any action that would commit the county board to spend more for the current fiscal year in any major category than the amount approved in the annual budget for that category.*” Again, this amendment is redundant and unnecessary.

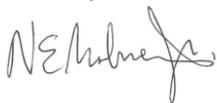
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The language proposed for the Wicomico County amendment mirrors that in the legislation for Anne Arundel County. In reaching out to the Chief Financial Officer in that county, we received the attached report that is submitted each month to the county government. It is clear from the Council meeting that this level of reporting is not what those who have driven this local initiative are looking for. When reminded of the information available through our Transparency Portal, they were not at all satisfied with even the additional detail that we provide. Instead, it was explained that they want a detailed explanation for every expenditure, what it is, and what it is used for. What these individuals are looking for is a semi-annual financial audit of our system. This additional audit of our school system had been previously requested by a Council member even prior to taking office, but was denied by the former County Executive because there are already provisions in place through annual audits and the legislative audit process to ensure the school system's sound financial management.

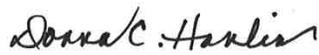
We believe that open and honest dialog lead to trust. Transparency and truthfulness are imperative. Legislation that is unnecessary and driven by some other motivation only fosters a lack of trust that ultimately has a negative impact on our community. We are left wondering what is the motivation behind this request for legislation given that our Board of Education and Finance Department have continuously received the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) meritorious award for budget reporting and the ASBO and Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) certificates of excellence for financial reporting based upon high standards for transparent budget development. In addition, we receive clean annual audits year after year and a strong legislative audit from this past year.

We ask that you decline to put forward this proposed piece of legislation and we are happy to discuss this with you further or respond to any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Gene Malone
Chair, Wicomico County Board of Education



Donna C. Hanlin, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Wicomico County Public Schools

cc: Wicomico County Public Schools Board Members