



**County Council
of
Baltimore County**

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June 7, 2022

The Honorable Julie Henn, Chair
Baltimore County Board of Education
6901 Charles Street
Towson, MD 21204

RE: BCPS Leadership

Dear Ms. Henn:

We are writing to express our deep concerns with the leadership at BCPS. During this past term, the Baltimore County Council has been extremely supportive of both the Board of Education and the Superintendent.

Throughout the past three and a half years, we have been ready, willing, and able to lend our knowledge and understanding of our individual Council Districts to BCPS, particularly the Superintendent, in order to assist the school system in providing the best services for our students, teachers, and parents. Just as importantly, we have also provided BCPS with the financial means to do so. In 2019, when the County Administration was forced to ask County taxpayers to contribute more dollars to cover an historic budget deficit, this Council continued to fund BCPS programs above the maintenance of effort level. When we were faced with potential catastrophic revenue shortfalls in 2020 as a result of the pandemic and cut over \$58 million from the FY 2021 Budget, this Council still funded BCPS at the maintenance of effort level and also continued with the *Schools for Our Future* construction program.

We recognize that the last two-plus years have posed significant challenges. We have all been affected by the pandemic and its direct health consequences and the vast interruptions to our normal way of life. Nonetheless, BCPS has been tasked with perhaps the highest and most urgent calling – the care, safety, and education of our children. But instead of rising to the challenge, BCPS leadership has struggled.

This is by no means a recent development. For several years now, BCPS has been dealing with low teacher and student morale, disciplinary problems in schools and on buses, high employee turnover rates, and overall declining student achievement. These issues came to a head in the efficiency report issued by Public Works, LLC last September following an examination of BCPS that began in February 2021. That examination found a top-heavy school system with low morale, poor communication, and a dysfunctional school board. The report said the structure of the school system's central office was ineffective and inefficient, and described a school board that fosters an atmosphere of discord and unprofessionalism, which results in people not trusting in its leadership.

While we agree with the Public Works, LLC report, it is the Superintendent that is the acknowledged leader of BCPS. He is the face of the entire organization and the failures and shortcomings in the system are his responsibility.

Tom Quirk
FIRST DISTRICT

Izzy Patoka
SECOND DISTRICT

Wade Kach
THIRD DISTRICT

Julian E. Jones, Jr.
FOURTH DISTRICT

David Marks
FIFTH DISTRICT

Cathy Bevins
SIXTH DISTRICT

Todd K. Crandell
SEVENTH DISTRICT

Thomas H. Bostwick
LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL
SECRETARY

As we stated previously, we have tried to offer our help. But the communication from the Superintendent's Office has been infrequent and inconsistent. Instead of having regular and meaningful consultations with us to discuss issues and solutions to achieve success in the school system, the Superintendent and his leadership team has been, for the most part, a silo. Each time over the past three years we have requested and been granted meetings or briefings from the Superintendent, the answers to our questions and concerns have been mostly "coach-speak" or scripted, with very little substance.

Our frustrations came to a head during the Budget Hearing with BCPS last month and again at our Work Session on Tuesday, May 31st and the Legislative Session on Monday, June 6th. However, we are by no means alone in our vexation. At a rally outside of a recent Board of Education meeting, members of the Randallstown NAACP and the teachers' union (TABCO) expressed similar concerns over student discipline, declining academic achievement – particularly for minority students, and teacher compensation.

BCPS has had, for the most part, normal in-person school operations this year. In addition, BCPS had over a year before the start of the 2021-22 school year to address issues such as vacancies – particularly the shortage of bus drivers. Instead, the most basic functions of a school system – getting students to school on time, providing a safe learning environment, and having enough teachers to provide instruction – are not being met, and the Superintendent offers no real solutions. We are the fiscal stewards of County dollars and we allocate about half of County residents' local tax dollars to BCPS. Yet under State law, the County Council has virtually zero input or collaboration with how that money is spent. There is no accountability in the performance of BCPS – none.

We have reached a crisis point where there is no other alternative but to request that, before considering renewal of the current Superintendent's contract next year, the Board conduct a comprehensive and wide-ranging Superintendent search. This is exactly what the Board did four years ago. Although the Board had an internal candidate in Verletta White, who was the Acting Superintendent at the time, the Board saw the wisdom in opening up the search to other potentially qualified candidates. The County Council believes strongly – and the current circumstances clearly warrant – that the Board should again conduct a thorough search and consider all qualified candidates for Superintendent of Baltimore County Public Schools.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We would also welcome further discussions on this and other topics related to the school system.

Sincerely,



Tom Quirk, Councilman



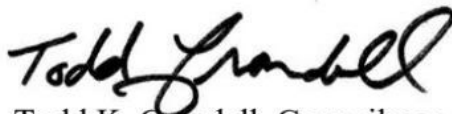
Wade Kach, Councilman



David Marks, Councilman



Cathy Bevins, Councilwoman



Todd K. Crandell, Councilman