

October 8, 2021

To: Dr. Williams

From:

American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees Local 434 (AFSCME)

Council of Administrative and Supervisory Employees (CASE)

Education Support Professionals of Baltimore County (ESPBC), MSEA-NEA

Organization of Professional Employees (OPE)

Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO), MSEA-NEA

Re: Baltimore County Public Schools Operational Efficiency Review Report dated September 7, 2021

Collectively, our local unions represent nearly 14,000 Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) employees with over 100 different job titles and an incredibly diverse set of experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs about improving our schools and realizing the potential of the students we serve.

We have reviewed the Baltimore County Public Schools Operational Efficiency Review Report (OERR) produced by Public Works LLC. We believe that the recommendations listed below are critical to the school system's success and should be considered immediately by the Superintendent and the BCPS Board of Education (BOE). Enacting these recommendations is essential to the future success of the school system.

Our unions will be making these changes central to our advocacy this year and our work to elect the next BOE. BCPS faces historic challenges resulting from the pandemic and its effect on students, families, and educators. At the same time, we are presented with opportunities to implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, which can positively transform our schools. Enacting these recommendations makes the most of the opportunities in front of us and helps repair the trauma from the past 18 months.

The extensive BCPS Operational Efficiency Review Report made recommendations that BCPS needs to address and prioritize. The unions believe the following topics to be most urgent and require immediate attention.

1. Address the Office of Payroll/Office of Certification/Office of Benefits errors. The system needs to resolve the myriad of issues affecting employees' pay. There are still employees whose pay has remained inaccurate for over a year.
2. Mitigate the substitute crisis while seeking a permanent solution.
3. Streamline and improve the onboarding process.
4. Increase staffing. (see page 6 for our full position on staffing increases)
5. Full review and correction of all salary scales.

The union leaders require a seat at the table to collaboratively develop and implement solutions to our shared challenges. We need to serve and support each other, demonstrating our joint commitment to the success of Baltimore County Public Schools. We commit to valuing our collective expertise and wisdom. A Union Presidents and Executive Director (UPED) meeting needs to be scheduled and held no later than November 1, 2021. In Dr. Williams's proposed plan, he specifically calls for an "internal implementation plan." Union representation, representing educators and support staff at all levels of BCPS, must be engaged at all stages of the decision-making process, not at the end. We can achieve remarkable results if we pull together as a "BCPS team." Let us listen to and learn from each other.

All deliberations on mandatory subjects of bargaining must be negotiated within the parameters of the collective bargaining process and when agreed to should be incorporated into the Master Agreements.

This will enable discussion and action on these priorities so that our students have access to the world-class education that the children of Baltimore County deserve.

Compensation to Hire & Retain Highly Qualified Employees for all Five Bargaining Units

Turnover, vacancies, and the loss and/or reassignment of FTEs is a chronic problem. It directly affects staff morale and, in turn, student outcomes. We must address climate and morale issues by addressing the root causes of these problems.

Communication & Decision Making In Clear & Just Ways

BCPS cannot deliver on the promise of high-quality education when communication and decision-making protocols lack authentic transparency, collaboration, and timeliness.

The OERR found that employees fear retaliation when bringing forward problems and issues, and this trepidation blocks our shared ability to solve the many challenges facing our system. Dignity and mutual respect are some of the hallmarks of effective organizations. The ultimate form of respect is listening to each other. Let us build trust, the key to all relationships.

Staffing Levels That Will Serve all BCPS Students

While there are many vacancies and needs in the system, we believe that the areas of highest need are: bus drivers, bus attendants, building service workers, cafeteria workers, office professionals, office professional techs, and educators. Further, we call every school and program to have either an IEP chair or an IEP team facilitator.

In other areas, the OERR report does not go far enough; for example: Adult Assistants positions should be converted into ESPBC unit members to attract and retain adequate staff for our students receiving special education services.

We look forward to speaking with the Superintendent, his staff, and the Board about our recommendations. Teamwork is the key to addressing our challenges and resolving our problems. We pledge our total commitment to that process. We await your response to our concerns, our proposals, and how you would like to proceed to establish a process, a timeline, and anticipated outcomes. We respectfully request this be the first item on the UPED agenda for October 11, 2021.

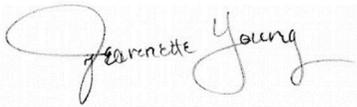
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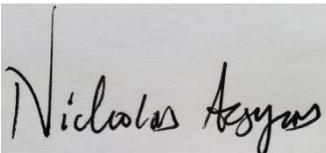
Bryan Epps, AFSCME



William Burke, CASE



Jeannette Young, ESPBC



Nicholas Argyros, OPE



Cindy L. Sexton, TABCO