January 14, 2020

Good Evening Chairwoman Causey, Vice Chair Henn, Dr Williams and Members of the Board

For five months I have been talking about effective teachers being the single most important factor in determining a student’s achievement. I’ve mentioned our resignation statistics, the attrition cost, and the academic cost to our students who are not being taught by educators who have had the chance to develop their craft. I have shared why our educators are leaving our county. More staff is great. It is what we need. We’ve been asking for these resources and Dr Williams, you listened and put hundreds more teachers in your budget. Thank you. The amount you have requested over maintenance of effort starts to address some of our significant needs.

My concern is that this budget does not do what we need it to do to attract educators to our county or to keep our current educators. What we need is fair pay and more planning time.

Baltimore County is 12th in the state for educator pay. 12th! How can we retain educators who can choose to earn hundreds of thousands more over their careers by simply crossing the county line? This budget grants higher raises to administrators than to educators. It appears from our initial calculations that the step and COLA increase will be insufficient to get ahead in the current economy. That is not the path to a world class school system.

And speaking of salary - we need longevity steps in this budget. We are talking about approximately 500 of our most senior, most trusted, and most committed educators. These are the people who mentor, who train, who hold our unique school cultures in their hearts and minds. They must be recognized; their commitment must be recognized- find the money for a longevity step and do what’s right.

Also, Baltimore County has struggled with student hours in the classroom for years, and for years, there have been conversations about adding time to the instructional day. My members are crying out for additional planning. During our ongoing negotiations, TABCO presented a generous offer adding additional time to the school day in exchange for more planning time and a series of other meaningful enhancements for a discounted cost. The response to this offer has been largely muted, at best.

Budgets are public expressions of priorities. TABCO’s priorities are to make Baltimore County among the top 10 school systems for pay, and for planning time. We know that this will bring in educators and help keep the ones we have. This budget- while taking critical and much appreciated steps on staffing- does not do the job we need it to. This budget does not- yet- express properly placed priorities for educating the children of Baltimore County.

Why can’t we take this opportunity, this budget, to solve our shared problems together?

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy L. Sexton

TABCO President