June 9, 2020

Dear Board of Education:

As a member of Howard County Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC), I am writing to request that FY 2020-2021 budget cuts do NOT come from the special education budget.

As you work to finalize the FY 2020-2021 budget with $30 million less than was asked, please remember those impactful statements made by HCEA members to the board of education in November 2019 regarding the lack of staff and training in special education. According to a press release by Dr. Martirano, “Special education is a priority of the budget proposal. A $15.1 million investment for special education includes 216.8 new staff positions, including teachers, paraeducators, student assistants and related service providers; as well as nonpublic placement tuition, intervention services and other costs to support a projected increase of 299 students receiving these services.” Special education has been historically underfunded. In the last decade, Howard County special education enrollment has been increasing and now stands at 10% of the total student enrollment, yet the hiring of staff to fulfill those needs has remained flat.

All teachers who work with special education students would be tasked with more work, longer hours and less planning time should additional funds be taken away from the special education budget. They would not be able to take important training that would aid in managing classroom behaviors. Special education students would lose services they are legally entitled to under IDEA. After not receiving adequate services during the COVID-19 closure, this would put our most vulnerable population even further behind their peers and the achievement gap will widen.

<optional personal story>

some kind of butt kissing platitude,

Thank you for your time

<name>