



November 29, 2021

Colleen Morris, President  
Ben Schmitt, Vice President  
Howard County Education Association  
Via email: [morris@mseanea.org](mailto:morris@mseanea.org)

Dear Ms. Morris and Mr. Schmitt,

We are writing to express our concern over the testimony that was given at the November 18, 2021 Board of Education meeting with regards to lack of staffing and the solutions offered by the Howard County Education Association. The Special Education Citizen's Advisory Council (SECAC) has advocated for decades for disability training, increase in staffing, full funding of the special education budget, and have informed numbers of parents on the legalities and processes of special education. At the heart of all of these longstanding issues are children not receiving appropriate services. The COVID pandemic has only heightened what has already been known by parents of students with disabilities.

While our sympathies go out to the staff for the trauma they endured, the only time children were mentioned was to identify the programs where the injuries occurred. As you know, students in these regional ALS programs have complex educational and social/emotional needs, with and without language deficits, who require intensive services and appropriately trained staff in order to insure FAPE. It may not have been the intention of HCEA to not address the long-standing causes to aggressive behavior in the school environment, but this viewpoint has left many interpreting the testimony as: students with disabilities are violent and are in need of segregation from the public school system as part of the short-term solutions to the lack of staffing caused by the pandemic.

It was also disheartening to hear that HCEA advocates for HCPSS to be openingly noncompliant with federal legislation because other districts are and nothing has happened to them. This is not only discriminatory in nature but also violates the provision of FAPE under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. To openly advocate for a reduction of services and violation of federal laws and state regulations, leaves the public impression that educators are actively working against parents and their children with disabilities. This creates an adversarial environment that is counterintuitive for an equitable education, the policies of HCPSS, and the Congressional intent of IDEA.

SECAC has long advocated for all teachers, students, and district personnel to be educated in the various disabilities the school system educates. We have supported appropriate training for all staff members, including the hiring of additional Board Certified Behavior Analysts to counter the growing number of complex students in the school district. We also have advocated for more special education teachers and paraprofessionals as opposed to temporary staff, who are not appropriately trained or educated, which can only happen with a fully-funded special education budget. SECAC does and is more than willing to communicate openly with advocacy and educational organizations who share a common mission. We would be open to discussing our views with HCEA, if you are willing to do so. We can be reached at [secacchair@gmail.com](mailto:secacchair@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Supreet Anand  
Co-Chair

Stephanie Mummert  
Co-Chair

Wendy Balda  
Vice Chair

Stephanie Carr  
Past Chair  
Chairman Community Outreach Committee  
Decoding Dyslexia: Howard County

Heather Walker  
At-Large Member

CC:  
Howard County Board of Education  
Howard County Public School System  
Howard County Autism Society  
Howard County Council