

January 31, 2019

Allegany County Board of Education
Mr. Robert Farrell, President, ET. AL.
108 Washington Street
Cumberland, Maryland 21502

Members of the Board:

I am writing today on behalf of the members of the Allegany County Education Association to ask that you consider our input during your deliberations over your budget. As ACEA has pointed out to previous Boards, your budget priorities should be aspirational and all of the priorities you adopted have merit in their own right. ACEA members hope that you keep a few of their concerns in mind as you apply your priorities to the creation of your budget.

As ACEA has also pointed out to previous Boards, it may sometimes seem like there is a competition between what is good for students and what is good for educators. This is simply not the case. Our members' working conditions are our students' learning conditions. The two cannot be separated.

Inasmuch as the morale of our members is vital to the work they do, budgetary decisions that affect our members affect our students and vice versa. As you are all aware, compensation for our members has not been as robust as we would like. According to data from the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland State Education Association, Allegany County now ranks 21st out of 23 jurisdictions in total career earnings for teachers and 23rd out of 23 in average salary for teachers with a Master's Degree.

I would ask as you deliberate to consider the demoralizing effect of working exponentially more and not receiving a commensurate increase in compensation to go with that increase in workload. Our members are working more now than they ever have. The loss of positions across all job descriptions and the increase in mandates and documentation requirements have pushed many of our members past the brink of exhaustion. Every survey of our members that ACEA conducts confirms and reinforces that fact.

Finally, I would suggest that the Board of Education should not see itself as alone in confronting the budget challenges you face. Our county government should share in that challenge. After all, the Commissioners should be working to accomplish the workforce development goals it has set by providing adequate resources for public education. Bringing back programs like the Agriculture Education Program that are vital to economic development and the maintenance of the heritage of this county, for example, should be shared responsibilities.

On behalf of ACEA, I thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Evan E. West
ACEA UniServ Director