

April 14, 2025

To: Dr. Lisa Bracken, Dr. Bryan Johnson, Chiefs, and members of ABOE

Re: FY 26 Budget

Dear Dr. Bracken, Superintendent Johnson, and members of the Board,

The Midtown Cluster Advisory Team (CAT) would like to formally express concern over the budget process and adequacy for FY '26 to you and the Chiefs/cabinet, as well as the members of the Board of Education as you take up discussion of the district budget. Our Cluster Advisory Team voted to send this correspondence (minutes and recordings available on the district's website).

Despite the modification made to the "over capacity" weight in the Student Success Funding formula (SSF), which resulted in some appreciated additional dollars for Midtown High School, we remain very concerned over the adequacy of school based funding for next school year and the subsequent year. Our middle school did not receive this over-capacity funding, and despite the additional funds, the high school was forced to eliminate teaching positions. As you know, the overwhelming majority of the Midtown school-based allocation goes to fund staff salaries. We fundraise for most expenses that are not salaries, while also supporting SSF to allocate funding to schools in APS with student populations having greater needs.

The shifting of resources from middle and high schools to the elementary grades will continue to constrain the budgets for upper grades if no resource reallocation is made. The CATs were informed recently that no changes will be made next school year to close or consolidate the small schools the district says is driving the APS budget shortfalls. If no decisions are made at the district level to free up additional resources for school allocations, our GO Teams will go into next year's budget discussions under similar duress as this year.

Also, the reduction in Signature Funds for STEAM seems steeper than for IB. Some of the items the district is funding for IB high schools should also be funded for STEAM high schools, for example TurnItIn - a plagiarism prevention program - as it is also required for AP courses.

We appreciate that budgeting is always a difficult process and choices must be made. We remain hopeful that as the district continues to finalize the budget for next school year, additional funds may be found to make the schools more whole so that teachers and students do not bear the brunt of slow right-sizing. The Midtown Cluster has 1,370 students who are economically disadvantaged, most of whom attend a school that does not receive Title I funding.

Sincerely on the behalf of the Midtown Cluster Advisory Team,  
Tamara Jones

Chair, on behalf of Midtown Cluster Advisory Team

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