

TO: Washington County Board of Commissioners
RE: Public Comments for the Business Session
DATE: May 15, 2024

Good evening. I am Carol Mowen, President of the Washington County Teachers Association. Our office is located at 18047 Oak Ridge Drive, in Hagerstown.

- When I provided public comments to you in March and April, I shared with you my hope that the county's draft budget would indicate a change in allocation for the Board of Education. I am before you again to ask you again. Your proposed allocation does not provide adequate funding to meet the needs of Washington County's schools.
- Economists have noted that we are not in the predicted recession that some thought would happen this year. Given that fact, as well as the historic under projections of county revenues in recent years, this Board of Commissioners can make the choice to do more for this county's students, teachers, and schools. And if you restore the income tax rate of prior years, you could access the state Disparity Grant and provide needed increases to the school system, the Commission on Aging, and other county agencies.
- This budget includes adjustments to the county government's salary scales to provide needed increases to make salaries competitive. The Board of Education needs an increased allocation to do the same. We cannot fill vacant Educational Support employees and, in the face of an increasing teacher shortage, we are not offering adequate compensation to our mid-career professionals. Some opt to leave for jobs in other school systems, and others leave education altogether to work in professions that reward them appropriately for their educational attainment and years of experience.
- You have access to resources if you choose to look at past practices, future projections, and choices that have been made by past commissioners.
- Thank you for providing the support you have given to WCPS. Once again, I implore you to find it in your hearts to step up your commitment and meet this moment with a new era of support for Washington County's students and schools.