

Meg Ricks
Candidate for Howard County Board of Education

QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE FORUM 2024

PTA-RELATED

Are you a current or former PTA member?

Have you had a PTA leadership role before?

When the school board makes decisions they will often consider how PTAs will respond to those decisions. For example, if the Board cuts a program, the Board may think that PTAs will step in to fund the program. What role should PTAs play in financially supporting the school system? How will you ensure that the Board will not rely on PTAs to pay for things the school system should be providing?

EXPERIENCE

Have you testified on any topic impacting HCPSS? If so, when did you testify and what was the topic?

What decision(s) by the current Board of Education have you agreed with, if any?

What decision(s) by the current Board of Education have you not agreed with, if any?

ROLE ON THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Our board of education can be divided on issues, what will you do to build consensus with Board members even on issues that you all may not agree on?

How would you work with the County Executive and County Council to increase or ensure adequate funding for the school system?

What parts of the Blueprint do you agree are good for HCPSS?

What parts of the Blueprint do you think may have a negative impact on HCPSS, if any?

What would be your #1 goal if elected to the board?

You are running to represent district X this election cycle. What do you think is the biggest need in your district and what are the biggest needs for each of the other 4 districts?

Recently, the Board of Education has been accused of not being transparent. What will you do to improve transparency?

Where would you like to see the school system in 4 years? In other words, what are your priorities if you win this term?

Do you think that the Student Member of the Board (SMOB) should be able to vote?

What aspect (if any) would you like to change on how the Board of Education conducts its business?

OPERATING BUDGET

Are you comfortable submitting a budget to the county executive that would fully fund the school system? Or do you think the budget should reflect the actual amount of money the school board is told it will likely receive from the County Executive and County Council?

HCPSS will continue to need to make cuts to meet the Blueprint's requirements. What would you cut? What revenue source would need to be leveraged to avoid making a cut?

What legislation do you support that helps to fund HCPSS?

CAPITAL BUDGET

What would be your plan for dealing with the millions in deferred maintenance?

How would you prioritize what schools should be renovated/replaced? What criteria would you use to make these decisions?

What role would you play in advocating for state funding?

What is your plan for making sure the county has an adequate number of schools?

Currently, our capital budget is prioritized by four areas: capacity needs, maintenance needs, state-identified needs, and age-based facility needs. The data is provided by the state and HCPSS. Do you think that decisions should be data driven or based on district needs?

REDISTRICTING

Should you have to make redistricting decisions, how would you rank the three factors identified in Policy 6010 – facility utilization, community stability, and demographic characteristics of the student population? Which one is the most important and which one is the least important?

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Can you explain how you see the board's role in ensuring that the school system complies with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (commonly known as IDEA)?

What can the Board of Education do to improve special education besides providing additional funding?

During your research for becoming an HCPSS board member what did you find to be the most pressing issue for special education?

DIVERSITY/EQUITY/INCLUSION

What does it mean to you to “Lead with Equity”?

What voices do you feel have been most ignored when it comes to school system policies and practices?

When it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, what has HCPSS and the Board of Education done right? What have they done wrong?

SCHOOL START TIMES

Do you support the change to later school start times? Why or why not? Do you think any additional changes need to be made?

TEACHERS

What do you think are the main issues affecting teacher retention and how will you address them?

More and more elementary school children are requiring mental health intervention to access their school’s curriculum. HCPSS schools are not prepared. The cuts to staffing positions AND the increased class sizes will only exacerbate this looming crisis. What is your plan to address this matter as the cuts are adding to the already overburdened schools?

SCHOOL SAFETY

How would you address the violence in our schools? What is your position on school safety and having SROs at the middle schools and high schools?

TRANSPORTATION/BUSSES

Given the rocky start to the school year, do you think that bus transportation continues to be an issue? Do you think students should have shorter distances to walk to school?

CURRICULUM/INNOVATION/EXCELLENCE

Howard County used to be known for its high academic standards of excellence among all Maryland county schools as well as in national rankings. Howard County's academic rigor has

declined precipitously in the last 5 years. How will you seek to improve Howard County's academic rigor?

With the removal of many programs in HCPSS due to budgetary reasons, what can we do as a school system to differentiate ourselves from our neighboring counties so that we can continue to provide excellent education opportunities to our students?

What are your thoughts on how to improve food quality in the cafeterias?

QUESTIONS NOT ASKED DURING THE FORUM, BUT SUBMITTED BY PTA MEMBERS OR FORUM AUDIENCE MEMBERS

PTA-RELATED

Other than contributing financially, how do you think PTAs can best work to improve our school system?

EXPERIENCE

Have you served on a HCPSS Policy committee before? If so, what committee, and what was your contribution?

ROLE ON THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

What external Board of Education appointment position(s) would you want to serve on and why?

Do you view the district representative position differently than the at-large positions? If yes, then how so?

As a district representative, how will you balance the needs of your district versus the needs of the entire school community if there is a conflict?

Do you favor more centralized state control of our education model or do you prefer more localized county control?

Board actions are made by a board not by individual members. If you end up voting against a board action that ultimately passes, what is the appropriate recourse to take? How should board members maintain the integrity of a board when they don't agree with the board's actions?

What, if anything, should be done to prevent “junior” boards? Do you think it’s a detriment to possibly have 5 brand new board members and two members who have only served two years?

Do you believe board of education candidates should accept donation from partisan organizations?

What would you focus on advocating for at the state level that impacts HCPSS?

Are you willing to stand up to lawmakers to remove mandatory and unfunded requirements?

OPERATING BUDGET

What is your position on increasing class sizes? Under what situation would you say it’s absolutely necessary?

How much weight will you give to student feedback on budget prioritization?

How much weight will you give to parent feedback on budget prioritization?

What are the last 3 things that should be cut from the operating budget and what are the first 3 things you would cut?

Do you support increasing central office and cluster staff? Would you be willing to cut all cluster level positions to hire more classroom teachers and classroom assistants?

CAPITAL BUDGET

Do you support putting High School 14 in Elkridge? If so, what will you do to move it forward on the Capital Improvement Plan?

Do you think relocatable portable classrooms are a solution to school overcrowding?

REDISTRICTING

What data points would you consider when redistricting?

Would you prefer to continue outsourcing redistricting guidance on a case-by-case basis, or develop a longer term in-house analytical capability?

Would you support an evaluation of the existing polygons to see what polygons make sense from a physical standpoint and what polygons may need changes to their existing boundaries in an effort to minimize driving distances and times?

SPECIAL EDUCATION

What is your understanding of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

What will you do to ensure our ALS (Academic Life Skills students – non-diploma bound) students have access to a well-rounded education that balances curriculum as well as the transition needs of our neediest students?

DIVERSITY/EQUITY/INCLUSION

Are you willing to make athletics equitable? Should every high schooler who wants to play a sport be able to be placed on a free high school team, even if it isn't varsity?

TEACHERS

What would you do to recruit and retain quality teachers and administrators in our county? What can we do to keep our most tenured and experienced teachers who are considering quitting because they receive very low pay?

Do you think teachers should have more autonomy? How much control should teachers have over the curriculum versus central office and cluster personnel control?

Do you support allowing substitute teachers, especially long-term substitutes who have to do lesson planning, grading, etc., having access to trainings provided by the school system for teachers? Currently, they are not allowed to register for these trainings and do not have access to the Frontline professional growth system.

CURRICULUM/INNOVATION/EXCELLENCE

Given the massive cuts to the county school budget being imposed to fund universal pre-K, what are your thoughts on how to preserve the high level of instruction and programming for HCPSS students at levels above pre-K?

How can you help support Art Education, including Music, Theater, Visual Arts, etc.)?

Do you support GT programs?

Do you support removing the recently implemented limitations to dual enrollment?