



*ACS supports Howard County nonprofits in the achievement of their missions  
because strong nonprofits improve the quality of life for all*

## **Howard County Council Public Hearing: Proposed FY 2021 Operating Budget February 12, 2020**

### Testimony

As Executive Director of the Association of Community Services, it is my privilege to offer testimony on behalf of our over 170 nonprofit member organizations and community advocates who work diligently on behalf of vulnerable populations in our community - one of which is the disability community. ACS supports the Special Education portion of the FY '21 Howard County Public School System Budget submitted by Superintendent Martirano.

Last year's budget request to the Board of Education included familiar requests for funding, however, the cuts made prior to budget approval by the County Executive significantly reduced the number of related service providers, para-educators, and Student Assistants that were requested. Therefore, our primary areas of concern pertain to staffing and training needs.

We request the additions of the following positions be included in the budget:

- A Board-Certified Behavior Analyst and several behavior support positions to address the growing diversity and complexity of behavioral support needs in our community.
- An instructional facilitator to oversee the growing continuum of services at the elementary school level to keep pace with the significant growth in recent years.
- Two resource teachers for the nonpublic and special education compliance office to begin the multi-year effort to develop and provide crucial trainings and additional supports around proper implementation of Individualized Education Programs.
- 217 special education staffing positions across all ages of students supported by the special education department in HCPSS in order to provide the necessary support within our schools and ensure best practices of meaningful inclusion.

Even as we recognize the large fiscal responsibility for these requests and the challenges that come with designing budgets, these additions are crucial to the health of our students, teachers, staff, and schools overall. Therefore, we urge you to fully fund Special Education as requested in the FY '21 budget and provide the resources necessary to keep our dedicated special educators in place and our children in classrooms with sufficient support.

Respectfully submitted,

*Joan Driessen*

Joan Driessen, Executive Director