
CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON SCOTT – MAYOR

 ZEKE COHEN - COUNCIL PRESIDENT



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

NANCY MEAD – DIRECTOR

100 N. HOLIDAY STREET

BALTIMORE MD, 21202

HEARING NOTES

Resolution: 25-0075

Title: Operating Budget for the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026

Committee: Budget & Appropriations

Chaired by: Danielle McCray

Hearing Date: 6/2/2025

Agency: Baltimore City Public School Systems (BCPSS)

Time (Beginning): 7:05 PM

Time (Ending): 10:00 PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Attendance: Approximately 50

Committee Members in Attendance:

Danielle McCray

Sharon Green Middleton

Paris Gray

Bill Synopsis in the file? YES NO N/A

Attendance sheet in the file? YES NO N/A

Agency reports read? YES NO N/A

Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded? YES NO N/A

Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file? YES NO N/A

Evidence of notification to property owners? YES NO N/A

Final vote taken at this hearing? YES NO N/A

Motioned by:

Seconded by:

Final Vote:

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

Dr. Sonja B. Santelises, CEO

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Major Issuss Discussed

Chair McCray opened the Budget & Appropriations hearing by welcoming members of the council and introducing the 25-0075..

A presentation was given by, Dr. Santelises, CEO of **Baltimore City Public School Systems (BCPSS)** [See PowerPoint in Bill File].

- Opening remarks & intros of staff leadership
- 7% increase in Blueprint
- Impact of recent Federal Actions – Loss approx. \$48 million
 - In response to suit – the US District Court issued a preliminary injunction and to continue to reimburse the funds. This means that MSDE resumed reimbursement. To date received \$38.1 million and \$3.5 submitted for reimbursement.
 - State of Maryland enacted economic hardship triggers that would reopen its FY26 budget. – City Schools would then also reopen budget.
- FY26 Budget is aligned with Board Goals and priorities include:
 - Accelerating student Achievement in Literacy and Match
 - Building College and Career Readiness through Secondary Success and Innovation
 - Improving attendance and dropout re-engagement
 - Supporting Mental Health
- Funding Considerations
 - FY26 Revenue \$1.87 billion includes general, special, and enterprise funds
 - Funded enrollment per MSDE increases in FY 26 due to increase in enrollment
- 4th year of blueprint funding
 - Through the council’s advocacy we have seen the cuts reversed.
 - Despite the variability received an increase in FY26
 - Based on blueprint design, end of ESSER, and Increasing position costs
 - Blueprint funding is not guaranteed – FY27 and FY28 includes cuts (Cannot assume that those dollars will be available)

Concluding the presentation, the floor was open to questions and comments from Councilmembers as summarized below:

- What does this next phase of City Schools looks like? Who are the voices that need to be heard during the search for the next CEO. Thank you to the Wholeness Team – around the Trauma Informed Care
- Would like to see improvement in attendance. Critical issue that needs to be addressed. Multiple barriers that include transportation.
 - The way kids are treated on the buses is not good enough. S-Passes previously not honored, and the commute time is unacceptable.

- What are you doing in partnership with MTA to improve commute times for kids?
 - Working relationship with MTA has improved.
 - Looking at Route optimization
 - Bell time tiers – transportation team and office teams when there was a shift in bell times
 - Working on contract vs district school buses (don't have the funds for full yellow bus system).
 - Will need to review where young people are zoned
 - Tech tools that track bus routes
- Would welcome the conversation about route optimization. We can't offer school choice if school choice is not really an option. BCPSS will need to push for improvement in transportation.
- We have to stay alert and on task with the loss of federal funds. Are you thinking ahead about resources and how they will be disbursed equitably? We should have a head start.
 - Board has made this a priority. Some of the preparation is understanding the budget.
 - Council's advocacy ensured state funding – advocacy needs to be at the forefront
- For the last 7 years – budget collaboratives – built a culture to ensure principals know how to make the case for critical needs for their schools
 - Guidance on the schools' budget process
- What is the timeline for the CEO search? What is the criteria from educators and families for being part of that search?
 - ALMA (Chicago based firm)
 - Search process is building out the profile of what we need/and our needs are
 - Allow us to update the position description
 - Recruitment
 - Selection
 - Onboarding with the board/schools
- Would like to see it even if it is a tentative search. Public facing timeline.
 - Can share a timeline
 - Current administration is looking to
 - Parents and teachers need to be at the table
 - City schools have a website with a tentative timeline with some details – and commits to refresh that information
- How do we retain the legacy residences in the community. Moving out of state or to the county. What is the enrollment retention strategy – bring them back or keep them in their schools.

- The choice for middle class AA families – part of what the BCPSS is looking at what families want it to look like – Legacy Families
 - Field trips, arts programming, sports, scholarship opportunities – more than the fundamentals
 - Looking at preK to see if they can stay onward
 - Looking at middle school to determine whether they can stay
 - Wholeness work we are doing to ensure that children have opportunities beyond the fundamentals and that there are more options.
 - What we need to do: Other districts marketing research on those families – top notch markers to determine and assess why families are leaving/staying.
 - School Leaders Accountable and improve Customer service
 - Ramp up Marketing data
 - Opportunities for City Schools across the board
- Drafted the bill about absenteeism – not all the things are not in the schools purview – transit is one of them. Chronic absenteeism
 - Figuring out funding for that – or if it reflected in this budget.
 - The study is all ready to go – but waiting on the funding.
- Huge opportunity to pair young people with jobs at the state and local level.
- Example 911 dispatch certification; cadet program; work with fire department.
- There is an opportunity with Youthworks/ young people still need to be prepared
- Can we look at the opportunities, types of opportunities, and if we have made connections how many students have taken advantage of these opportunities.
- Have some sense about cuts to HeadStart? Biggest investment – students with disabilities, low income, multi-lingual learners.
- Can you expand on what that looks like with the multi-lingual learners? Talk about the 40.X million in the schools looks like.
 - Filling ESOL positions
 - 11 of the schools are over multi-lingual learners
 - Whole school community to ensure there is investment
 - Work with in the central office – but having multi-lingual learners
 - Working with all teachers
 - Monitoring students and track their progress
 - Important work at middle and high school to ensure they have the resources and coteaching
 - Fewer dropouts, increasing
- Multilingual enrollment center – that’s where students are welcomed to the system
 - Support with paperwork
 - Screening for students
 - More robust space – more FTE in the budget

- Uplift the work that has been done. Looking forward to working with BCPSS
- Workplace safety – what preparation for principals, managers to incorporate heat safety.
- 7/8 years ago a number of system went down. Used that time to update protocols surrounding heat safety and climate.
 - Schools have remote electronic systems to monitor the temperatures.
 - Schools office tighter communication with school based staff, principals, and administrators.
 - Significant lower number issues – clear protocols about when we have to dismiss/close schools.
 - All buildings have air conditioning
 - Further along with the physical aspects but working together.
 - Clarify what the standards are to keep workers safe specifically when school is out of session.
- OSHA training
 - Emergency manager on board to ensure training regarding injury on worksite
 - Additional PPE – looked at the uniforms are conducive during hot and cold periods
- Deferred maintenance – and how much investment each year, and how much we need.
 - BCPSS is similar to other agencies – we don't have enough resources for the infrastructure that we have.
 - Board is investing in preventive maintenance work
 - Capital budget is 1/3 of what we need
 - How can we look at this differently and out of the box.
 - City's School is the largest borrowing (when we look at where we are investing Capital Budgets – City schools 21st century schools)
- Middle School Supports –
 - Going really well. Working with athletics office and challenges with transportation – but there is an outside vendor
 - Mayor's commitment through recs and park
 - Its part of the budgeting process – schools give \$ per pupil. Seeing more offerings for both girls and boys. Mapping those offerings to ensure there is middle school and high school offerings. Great partnerships for offerings such as golf. Partners at UA – to determine what is feasible
 - Do we have the data FY24-FY26 the number of schools offerings sports and the number of students enrolled– CR (2 weeks)
- School based violence program
 - Improved attendance
 - Increased relationships with young people and families
 - Making a visible difference

If there is a risk that we are not able to fund this program – that the Mayor and City Council is made aware

- School CTE discussion
 - Overview of the vocational training and enhancement you would like to see next year.
 - Increased apprenticeship opportunities – is a priority
 - Added an additional position
 - Where we have CTE programming and plans to expand it
 - Moving away for CTE centers – students want this all over the city
 - Changing the strategy
 - Must have good partnerships with industry partners
- Do believe this is the moment. Building a lot in the next 10 years. The reality is that under indexed for the trades. We don't have the workforce for those jobs. We need to rebuild Baltimore for Baltimore by Baltimore.
- Community Schools – been leading for a long time. During the last legislative session, cutting the concentration of poverty grant – clear that we can't do that that would disproportionately effect kids in Baltimore.
 - There is a gap in quality control to be an effective community schools coordinator.
 - Baltimore City was held up as an example in the state
 - Standing ovation
 - We have 13 lead agencies, grant funds out to those agencies, they are providing school supports. Lead agency – 68 run through BCPSS
 - How do we track project
 - Data dashboard will be implemented – not just the outputs
 - Will give us the impact
 - Offer quarterly training
 - Community Schools Coordinators report to the Office.
- Absenteeism and the 10% rule – failing grades
 - Does not factor sickness – do you foresee changing that policy?
 - State Superintendent is entuned to this issue – and the State's Report Card
 - What do you think about how that impacts the overall school grade.
 - The fairness of what absenteeism is factored in the school report card – moving towards the student growth.
 - This metric creates a sense of urgency on ensuring that attendance matters.
- Why did we reduce the Math instruction 90 mins to 45 mins. Quality of teaching we need. Why did we make that instructional change?
 - Research is clear that quality is more important, science and language is being short changed

- Deliberate commitment to ensure time for science, social studies, and other subjects.
 - 55 mins for math
 - Working with schools/principals on scheduling
 - Math – repurposing some other times to add more math instruction to ensure meeting the 55 mins

Chairwoman McCray recessed hearing at the end of the questions.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes **No**

If yes, describe.

BCPSS	Torrence	BCPSS	7-Jul	Provide a public facing timeline for the CEO search.
				Provide a list of all the career opportunities at each agency and the types of opportunities there are for students in different career path partnerships. In addition, please provide the data on the number of students that have taken advantage of these opportunities.
BCPSS	Conway	BCPSS	1-Jul	
BCPSS	Blanchard	BCPSS	16-Jun	Provide the data FY24-FY26 breakdown of middle schools offering sports with details on the sport offerings and the number of students enrolled

Committee Vote: N/A

Paroma Nandi, Committee Staff

Date: 6/2/2025

Cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File