



June 29, 2020

Dear Anne Arundel County Council Members,

The undersigned organizations, simply as a matter of equity, implore the Anne Arundel County Council to pass a resolution reversing the recent Anne Arundel County Board of Education’s drastic cut in the funding of Anne Arundel County’s public school transportation costs for the 2020 - 2021 school year.

An equity review of education should include a review of public school transportation funding because for many students the “yellow school bus” provided by the school system is the safest way students have to get to school to grasp the opportunity that public education provides. How the yearly school budget is implemented determines the public school system’s ability to ensure equitable access to education.

Equity in access to education by way of the funding of transportation is critical, especially, after the recent on-line educational experience that has left many children of color falling deeper and deeper into the preexisting educational gap. We believe that Black and Brown students will be disparately as well as negatively impacted should the cuts in the transportation budgets be allowed to continue.

As a community, we must ensure that all children receive equitable access to the opportunity of education. Particularly, in the area known as the Annapolis school cluster where children who have to walk to school may be exposed to unsafe conditions such as busy thoroughfares and related traffic incidents.

It is our understanding, and directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, that the budget cut was made by the Board of Education so that there could be an increase in the number of mental health workers across the school system for the upcoming school year. As the increased need for mental health staff appears to be directly related to the pandemic, we would like to suggest that funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act be used to fund these positions, particularly, in support of the racial trauma that the pandemic has made even more apparent.

According to a report by Prismatic Services, Inc., there appear to be internal adjustments or managerial improvements that might be made in the transportation department, itself, that would cover the costs of the additional mental health workers.

(<https://www.aacps.org/cms/lib/MD02215556/Centricity/Domain/280/Transportation%20Services%20Comprehensive%20Evalaution%201-8-20.pdf>; Opinion Editorial by Joanna Tobin, June 24, 2020, <https://www.capitalgazette.com/opinion/columns/ac-ce-20200624-uxjknjjpzvftpndcqahain3cde-story.html>)

Finally, viewing all proposed education budget cuts through an equity lens from the perspective of the undersigned organizations will ensure fairness and continued educational opportunity for all the students in Anne Arundel County. We appreciate your willingness to consider this request and would like to stress that equity means opportunity. Thank you for ensuring that all of our students have the opportunity of a public school education.

Sincerely,

The United Black Clergy of Anne Arundel County
The Caucus of African American Leaders
The Anne Arundel County Branch, NAACP
Connecting the Dots
Communities Actively Seeking Transparency
Annapolis Coalition of Black Progressives
Showing Up for Racial Justice, Annapolis & Anne Arundel County
Anne Arundel County Indivisible
First Christian Community Church of Annapolis

Cc: Anne Arundel County Executive Steuart Pittman