

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Marnell A. Cooper
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

January 27, 2017

Dear City Schools families, students, partners, and friends,

Last December, as the district worked to develop its budget for the 2017-18 school year, I shared with the City Schools community that we were again facing a gap between our anticipated funding and our estimated expenses. This has happened for the past several years—but for the coming school year, the gap is particularly large at approximately \$130 million.

This morning, I am meeting with lawmakers who represent Baltimore in Annapolis, to review where we are with our budget development and discuss the challenges we face. In a continued commitment to transparency, I want to share that conversation with you.

First, I want to emphasize that while our limited resources will make closing a gap of this size very difficult, we will do so while continuing programs that we know are important for student success, such as full-day pre-k and the 21st Century School Buildings Plan. Our teachers, principals, support staff, and administrators will remain committed to providing high-quality educational opportunities for our students.

In the past, we have closed our annual budget gaps with short-term solutions—like spending and hiring freezes. While we have had some layoffs, we have been able to concentrate those in the district office, rather than schools. But these solutions have not addressed the cause of the problem: Quite simply, our revenue has declined while our costs continue to go up. We are now exploring multiyear options to break this annual cycle and ensure financial stability for the long term. We must address this fundamental challenge, so that we will not continue to experience large gaps every year.

While I am confident that these efforts will be successful over time, the fact remains that as a public agency we must present a balanced budget this year. We will need to implement some of those same short-term solutions that have been used in years past to reduce costs, and my team and I are looking at all the options so as to minimize the impact on students. At the same time, we will be advocating at both state and city levels for the increased education funding that Baltimore's children need and that is so necessary for the long-term vitality of our city. We will need the partnership of our entire community in joining this effort.

However, in the spirit of transparency that I promised when I returned to City Schools last July as your CEO, I must tell you that without additional funding, we are facing layoffs of more than a thousand staff members. Because of the size of the budget gap, we will not be able to focus cost savings in the district office as we have done in past years. Most of the layoffs will affect staff members in schools.

I want to assure you that this does not mean we will work with any less urgency to provide our students with the high-quality teaching and learning they deserve. While we will not have the resources to accelerate this work, we will prioritize spending in areas we know have potential for the greatest impact

on student success—including a strong classroom focus on literacy, staff development and leadership, and addressing the needs of the whole child with support for physical, social, and emotional well-being.

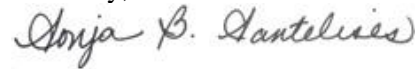
As school communities move through this difficult time, it is more important than ever to ensure that all stakeholders are involved in budget conversations at the school level. All schools have a responsibility to collaborate with parents, community members, and partners. I want to encourage you to participate in any activities and meetings scheduled at your school to discuss budget priorities. Your voice and input is needed as we navigate the budget process together.

If you are interested in learning more about where our funding comes from and why it hasn't met our expenses, [please visit this dedicated website](#).

I, along with my staff, will continue to advocate for everything our students deserve. I give you my commitment that our students will always be our highest priority as we make decisions, and that I will keep you informed all along the way.

Thank you for all you do for our students and our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sonja B. Santelises".

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer