

## ETHICS BALLOT QUESTIONNAIRE

### Howard County Board of Education Primary 2024

Congratulations on your decision to run for the Howard County Board of Education. The People's Voice is a civic/political organization in Howard and Montgomery Counties. We have over 4,800 members in Howard County and sponsor the non-partisan Ethics Ballot. If you would like to seek endorsement to The Ethics Ballot please return this Questionnaire to [EthicsBallot@Gmail.com](mailto:EthicsBallot@Gmail.com) by midnight Tuesday March 26. Please note that all questionnaires are published on the website, [www.EthicsBallot.com](http://www.EthicsBallot.com). We will be in touch regarding endorsement dates soon after getting the questionnaires back. We pride ourselves in working hard for our endorsed candidates, and look forward to hearing your positions on important County issues. THANK YOU so very much for your time!

**Be sure to address all aspects of each question. Feel free to add additional pages with question numbers noted to provide more information on each question as needed, or fill in more space herein. Be sure to return via email in Word or text format.**

Name/District: Cat Carter, District 5

Campaign Address/Phone/Email/Social Media/Website (if not on MD Board of Elections site)

<https://carter4schoolboard.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/carter4edu/>

cartercares4education@gmail.com

Campaign manager Cat Carter

Educational & Employment History

Bachelor's degree in English Teaching, Secondary Education

I have taught English and English as a Second Language ESL in affluent, migrant, and Title 1 schools.

I am a small business owner of a cybersecurity company and Chief Sales Officer

Relevant Experience (including fiscal and budget management)

I am an education advocate who has worked for the last nine years to ensure our kids have the resources they need to learn through legislative and policy changes. I am a small business owner of a cybersecurity company that believes in a balanced budget and preparing our students with the skills they need for the future workforce. I am a former English and ESL teacher in affluent, migrant, and Title 1 schools who understands that an effective school has a bottom-up approach of empowering our schools and ensuring the classroom teacher receives the support they need to teach our children.

Causes financially supported, fund raising work promoted

1. Why are you running for this office? What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office? Describe why you feel you have a viable campaign.

I'm running for this office because I see an opportunity to fix what's broken. With a family legacy of educators and advocates for positive change in schools, I'm driven by a passion to make a difference. My unique background as a third-generation teacher and a nonpartisan advocate has equipped me with the skills needed to address complex issues facing our students and community.

Throughout my career, I've successfully collaborated across party lines to pass multiple bills and programs aimed at solving pressing challenges. From supporting soldiers with Traumatic Brain Injury to advocating for changes in state and national education policies for visually disabled children, my track record demonstrates a commitment to improving the lives of others.

In 2024, I'm focused on championing the Lifesavers School Program bill, which prioritizes students' and staff's first aid training and mental health support through peer-mentorship programs in schools. My advocacy efforts have always centered on enhancing our schools and community for the better.

You can learn more about my successful advocacy initiatives on my website:

[carter4schoolboard.com](https://carter4schoolboard.com). With a proven record of delivering results, I believe my campaign is not only viable but essential for bringing about positive change in our education system.

2. What experience do you have with the HCPSS? Have you ever testified before the Board of Education? What positions did you take? (Those with vast experience, pick most important to you.)

My involvement with the HCPSS includes multiple testimonies before the Board of Education. A significant focus has been advocating for my son and other students with non-acuity vision impairments to receive doctor-recommended vision accommodations. Additionally, I've campaigned for the inclusion of healthy, safe eyes and ears instruction within the health class curriculum. Furthermore, I've collaborated with lawmakers to ensure its incorporation into the new state health curriculum for fifth grade. These efforts underscore my commitment to improving educational access and well-being for all students within the Howard County Public School System.

3. Funding all the needs of the HCPSS community is harder than ever, given added mandated funding of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future program, and the past use of one-time Covid funds for recurring costs. How do you believe funding shortfalls should be addressed? What areas of the HCPSS budget do you believe are the best areas to cut in order to meet funding needs? Are there areas that you believe should be the last to ever have funding cut?

The School Board needs to make decisions we can afford. As much as some may want it, we can't afford the new school times (we need to stagger our times), redistricting (students need to attend their closest schools to reduce cost, bus times, and walking distance), the current ZUM contract (we need to renegotiate and look at cost-saving options), a top-heavy administration (we need a bottom up approach to our schools) because it means we can't afford to continue to ensure our students have the buses they need to get to school, offer a competitive pay scale to recruit and retain highly qualified staff, reduce class size, keep critical and innovative programs, and school construction. The list goes on.

We need to tell Annapolis lawmakers that their unfunded mandates are hurting our school budgets and advocate for fiscal and legislative reprieve. Howard County does not have the money. We need legislative reprieve to implement and fund these mandates so Howard County can continue to recruit and retain highly qualified staff,

keep our classroom sizes down, school construction, close the achievement gap, and ensure our students get a high-quality education.

4. Where do you think school construction should be prioritized? How would you address getting schools built faster where they are most needed? Include your thoughts about how to juggle maintenance needs as well.

The decisions regarding our school renovations by the school board lack a data-driven approach. The proposed allocation of Built to Learn funding is primarily based on capacity, deferred maintenance, state-identified facility needs, and the age-based requirements of facilities. Despite several schools, including Dunloggin Middle School, meeting these criteria, changes at the school level are often made without relying on data. It's imperative to ensure that our school models prioritize cost-effectiveness for easier maintenance. Advocacy efforts towards the county council should emphasize reallocating more of their budget towards school construction and repairs, while ensuring that our development and infrastructure adequately support existing and future schools. Furthermore, we must urge the Maryland General Assembly to sustain funding for Built to Learn to facilitate repairs in more of our schools. In the interim, prioritizing safety and capacity should be our foremost concerns.

5. How do you think overcapacity school concerns should be addressed? Do you believe current enrollment projection methods need to be changed? If so, how? What, if anything, should be done, when enrollment ends up significantly higher than projected project estimates?

As a candidate for the Howard County School Board, District 5, I believe addressing overcapacity school concerns requires a multifaceted approach. Firstly, we need to assess the accuracy and effectiveness of our current enrollment projection methods. If these methods are found to be outdated or inadequate, then they must be updated or replaced with more reliable techniques that account for demographic shifts and community growth patterns.

In cases where enrollment ends up significantly higher than projected estimates, proactive measures must be taken to accommodate the increased student population. This could involve implementing temporary solutions such as portable classrooms or modular buildings while more permanent solutions are being developed. Additionally, collaboration with county officials and community stakeholders is essential to explore options for expanding existing school facilities or constructing new ones to meet the growing demand.

Furthermore, proactive planning and engagement with developers to anticipate the impact of new residential developments on school enrollment can help mitigate future overcapacity concerns. By adopting a proactive and collaborative approach, we can ensure that our schools have the necessary resources to provide a high-quality education for all students, even in the face of fluctuating enrollment numbers.

6. Do you believe the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) should be strengthened, weakened or left the same regarding school capacity? Why? Note any desired changes. Note how you feel the Board of Education can or should be involved in APFO.

I firmly believe that the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) needs to be strengthened with regards to school capacity. It's crucial to ensure that our schools can adequately accommodate the growing population without compromising the quality of education or student experience.

Desired changes include implementing stricter guidelines for development approval, tying it more closely to school capacity thresholds. Additionally, incorporating periodic reviews and updates to account for demographic shifts and enrollment trends would be beneficial. Furthermore, provisions should be made to address any discrepancies between projected and actual student populations to prevent overcrowding situations.

The Board of Education should play a pivotal role in shaping and enforcing APFO policies. By working collaboratively with county planning and zoning departments, the board can provide valuable insights and data-driven recommendations to inform decision-making processes. Moreover, the board should advocate for transparent communication and community engagement to ensure that APFO revisions reflect the needs and concerns of students, parents, and educators alike. Strengthening APFO will not only safeguard the integrity of our school system but also promote sustainable growth and development in Howard County.

7. Describe positions you have taken, votes you have made, or testimony you have given that you feel is the most important regarding HCPSS issues. Describe how you championed causes, include at least one example of any of your positions or votes that you regret, or about which you feel differently.

When it comes to redistricting and not staggering the new school times, we cannot afford what they decided to do and we're paying the price on the other end. You got a budget that went from \$31 million in 2021 for transportation to \$67 million next year and our number of students hasn't increased. You have parents driving 40 minutes to their High School. You have kids walking because they changed the boundaries...."let's fudge these lines instead of door to door"....the kids are walking from one zone of their apartment complex to the edge of the school and they're walking for a mile and a half because of numbers getting fudged, and we have kids who are being attacked on the way.

It's not right what's happening to our kids, it's not right what's happening to our budget. What we need to focus on is what we can afford, and when we do the redistricting we need to realize that when you move a child further from the community you're forgetting the community. Those kids need more support in their community and that's what our budget and our finances should be focused on. These kids shouldn't be spending long hours on a bus to get to their school and back. These parents shouldn't be spending long hours driving their kids to school because that's not right. It's not building a community and creating disadvantages for the very kids the school board is trying to help.

8. How do you feel altercations should be handled in schools? Include any staffing changes you believe should occur.

As a former teacher, I will advocate for a balanced approach to handling altercations in schools. Prevention is key through promoting positive behavior and conflict resolution skills. Trained staff for timely intervention and clear protocols ensure incidents are managed effectively, prioritizing safety. Enhanced support from administration and updated policies further strengthen our approach. Additionally, implementing teacher mentorship programs for classroom management provides valuable support for new teachers and fosters a positive learning environment. Fair and effective punishment

policies, considering the severity of the offense, uphold standards while promoting a positive school climate. By prioritizing safety and support, we create an environment where students can thrive academically and socially.

9. What HCPSS policies do you believe should be changed regarding protections of marginalized groups? Include in your answer your views on how to address achievement gaps.

In my campaign for HCPSS policies that support marginalized groups, I emphasize a pragmatic yet compassionate approach that resonates with the diverse needs of our community. I believe in ensuring that every student, irrespective of their background, has the opportunity to thrive. By scrutinizing existing policies, I aim to implement changes that provides robust support systems for all students.

To bridge achievement gaps, I champion mentorship programs that offer personalized guidance and encouragement to students facing challenges. These initiatives not only inspire students but also equip them with the tools needed to navigate obstacles and achieve their aspirations. Additionally, showcasing diverse success stories and pathways ignites hope and ambition among our youth. By fostering a culture of kindness and empathy, we create a nurturing environment where every student feels valued and supported. As your advocate, I'm committed to partnering with behavioral health coordinators to ensure students in need have access to vital local resources, both within and beyond the classroom. Together, let's work towards closing achievement gaps and building an educational experience that empowers every student in the HCPSS.

10. What criteria should be prioritized in redistricting?

In redistricting for the HCPSS, I emphasize criteria that resonate with the frustrations of our community, particularly concerning school budgets and financial strain. We must prioritize cost-effective solutions that alleviate the strain on school budgets while ensuring quality education for all students. By scrutinizing transportation costs, including bus routes and walking distances, we can identify opportunities to streamline operations and reduce expenses without compromising student safety.

Moreover, addressing overcapacity in schools is crucial for optimizing resources and improving the learning environment. By strategically redistributing student populations, we can maximize the efficiency of school facilities and minimize the need for costly expansions or renovations. This approach demonstrates responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars while prioritizing the needs of our students and educators.

As your advocate, I understand the frustrations surrounding school budgets and prioritize fiscal responsibility in all decision-making processes. By implementing redistricting plans that are both cost-effective and strategic, we can address the concerns of our community and ensure that our schools remain strong and sustainable for generations to come.

11. Special education funding has increased over the last several years, but special education student outcomes have not improved. How would you address the legal requirements for students with disabilities to ensure positive outcomes?

To address the gap between increased special education funding and stagnant student outcomes, I propose a three-pronged approach. Firstly, we need to ensure parents of students with disabilities are connected to local medical providers to facilitate comprehensive support systems. Secondly, applying for grants to foster collaboration and mentorship among special education staff will enhance their effectiveness in meeting student needs. Lastly, implementing a system that encourages innovative strategies tailored to individual student goals is essential for driving positive outcomes. By prioritizing collaboration, innovation, and student-centered support, we can meet legal requirements while ensuring improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

12. What research, contract accountability and financial data would you require before supporting a procurement contract? Include in your answer what changes you would recommend to avoid service failures like we experienced recently with the bus system.

When considering contracts for essential services like transportation, my approach is grounded in practicality and accountability. Before endorsing any contract, I prioritize thorough research to ensure it meets industry standards and aligns with our district's needs. This involves examining the company's track record and performance history to gauge reliability and quality.

Financial prudence is essential. I will carefully evaluate the proposed contract's costs to ensure they are reasonable and within our budget constraints. To mitigate the risk of service failures, I advocate for contracts that include safeguards to protect the school district, such as clear performance expectations and consequences for non-compliance.

Transparency and community involvement are key principles of my approach. I believe in keeping stakeholders informed and engaged throughout the procurement process, ensuring their voices are heard and their concerns addressed. By prioritizing practical solutions and responsible decision-making, we can secure contracts that meet our needs while being mindful of taxpayer dollars.

By Authority: The People's Voice, Lisa Markovitz Treasurer