

Individual Information

Name/District: Julie Christine Hotopp, District 4

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Social Media Accounts: @DunningHotopp on Twitter; Julie Hotopp on Facebook

Education History: 1997 BS in Microbiology and Immunology University of Rochester; 2002 PhD in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, Michigan State University

Languages Spoken/Other Skills: English

Relevant Experience: I live in Howard County and am a mother of two children – a 6th grader at Wilde Lake Middle School and a rising Kindergartener. I have taught students for over twenty years, going back to when I was a graduate student when I received formal didactic training, as well as mentored training, in teaching and education. I have been a professor for over ten years at a major Maryland medical school.

List who has been compensated to provide services to your campaign. List your campaign managers. Note current cash on hand. Note your donations received and spent, although you need not include figures that are already filed on campaign finance reports.

Compensated: No one

Campaign Manager: Mr. Kerry Hotopp

Cash on hand: None

Donations received and spent: None

List organizations/groups/committees (both education-related and not) of which you are an official member.s

Member, American Society of Microbiology

Research Parasite Award Committee, Member and current Chairperson

Member of numerous work-related committees as part of my professional duties at work

Community Interest / Position Questions

1. Why are you running? Explain why you are qualified to hold this position. Please include your experiences doing volunteer or non-profit work, in Howard County and elsewhere. (Character limit please 1200)

I am running as a write-in candidate because I add a different perspective than the other four candidates left in the district 4 race at this time. The Board of Education as a whole has repeatedly demonstrated that they do not support open meetings or transparency, which deeply concerns me, as open meetings and transparency are foundations of our democracy.

As a whole, the current Board of Education seems to favor a top-down approach that (1) allows citizens to speak, but largely does not engage the public in dialogue and (2) renders decisions without conveying in a meaningful way the reasons behind those decisions. I want to change this. My background in scientific research, which is highly collaborative, has demonstrated to me that it is only through collaborative conversations of diverse individuals that the greatest advancements are made. My experiences with students and employees have demonstrated that humility and honesty are crucial, as is the ability to be forthright and pragmatic. These are all essential traits for an effective board member.

2. Do you believe the Board of Education race should remain non-partisan on the ballot? If so, how is your campaign remaining non-partisan? (Character limit 1200)

The Board of Education race should be a non-partisan race. Partisan politics should not have a place in such a race. But realistically and pragmatically, every individual can endorse and fund candidates of their choice, and such endorsements include those from our current and past Congressional, state, and council delegations as well as other members of political organizations, like our County Executive, from both parties. As such, I am left wondering, is this really a non-partisan race or is it only non-partisan on the ballot? Despite that, there are still advantages to the current system, particularly in making independents, of which there is at least one on the board, more electable than a two-party system would likely allow. However, others have suggested (without providing a reference) that non-partisanship tends to produce elected officials more representative of the upper socioeconomic strata. If this is true, it is something that is important to consider and try to mitigate. I am remaining non-partisan by focusing on issues important to me that are related to the school system, regardless of how they align with any political party.

3. Do you believe the Superintendent's requested budget is too high, too low or just right? If too low, how much should it be, and what other county budget items should be cut to fund it? If too high what should be cut from the request? (Character limit 1200)

The superintendent's request is in a good faith and ideally funding needs to approach the requested level. We repeatedly have made cuts that ultimately increase future costs, which is part of the problem that got us here. Smaller class sizes are associated with better academic outcomes, particularly for the most disadvantaged students. The anticipated poorer outcomes from larger class sizes will yield increased future costs in a spiral that started years ago. Increasing class sizes will likely lead to more children needing accommodations and IEPs/504 plans. The special needs of some children will go unnoticed longer, which is associated with poor outcomes and more expensive remedies for language delays, dyslexia, dysgraphia, and other special needs. Fully funding the superintendent's budget would be a wise fiscal policy. However, with COVID-19, Howard County and our country's financial situation is in flux, and sadly adjustments and sacrifices will likely need to be made.

4. Over time, the County Council and Board of Education have often disagreed on where responsibility lies regarding addressing overcapacity. There are varying beliefs regarding

restricting development and redistricting as tools. How do you suggest the County Council and Board of Education work together to address overcapacity issues? (Character limit 1500)

The first step is to recognize that 101% capacity is over capacity. Suggesting that 110% is okay is part of the larger issue. Expected fluctuations in capacity, as housing turns over, can cause a 110% capacity to quickly rise to 120% or more even during the school year. Second, the County Council has to restrict development where there is not capacity at the local school and no plan to increase capacity. It is unfair to ask families to uproot their children from their community, to attend a different school farther away, in order to allow further development in an area without capacity. More importantly, redistricting is disruptive when done poorly. If we want to continue to have successful development and be a community where folks want to raise a family, we need family friendly policies. Redistricting can be heartbreaking, builds rifts, and should be minimized. There will be times when large scale redistricting is necessary, as will have to happen when the new high school is completed. In those cases, the process should begin a year earlier, with proper and adequate notification, and allow for multiple rounds of conversations between everyone involved, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and Board of Education members. It must also include time for an appropriate appeals process.

5. How do you define Equity? Suggest how the HCPSS can better ensure equity. Give specific examples, including how to accomplish those goals in the budget. (Character limit 1500)

I prefer the terms equality and inequality. One of the great inequalities is income and resource inequality. But ironically, I would say from my own personal experience, poverty in childhood may have been the greatest gift to me. I am so driven because I never want to be poor again. But I also didn't know I was poor and thought the world was my playground with limitless possibilities. Children need to know they have the opportunity to achieve greatness regardless of where they begin. Schools need to have adequate funding to ensure kids have opportunities in their schools and that we treat kids not as a statistic, not as under-privileged, but as unique individuals with tremendous potential. It should not be a discussion point that lowers kids' self-esteem within the school system, which is why I support having more direct qualifying schools like Bryant Woods elementary school. Additionally, more of the work to address inequality needs to happen outside the school system. For instance, I've heard folks state they prefer four-day weeks and a longer school calendar because too many kids don't get fed over the summer. Yet four-day weeks are a difficult burden for all families where both parents work, including these very same families as they have to secure and pay for childcare. Wouldn't the more optimal solution be to make sure kids (and grown-ups) are fed every day year round?

6. What do you believe Board of Education Members can do to help students achieve their fullest potential at all levels? Please include in your answer what you believe should be done to close any achievement gaps, be specific. (Character limit 1500)

For students to achieve their fullest potential, the most important thing we need to do is to attract and retain the best teachers and staff. For this reason, I strongly support the

paraeducator-to-teacher program. My own mom successfully took a similar route, starting off as a lunch aide, then teacher's aide, while working her way through college to ultimately become a guidance counselor, so I know it can be done. In addition, I would like to see that teachers that move in from other states, with years of experience and good recommendations, can quickly and easily become permanent teachers in the Howard County public schools, which was not the experience of my neighbor. We also need to ensure that we have the appropriate policies and programs in place to attract the best undergraduate students upon their graduation from undergraduate education programs. Our salaries are competitive, as are the benefits, but our policies also need to be, and that includes a reasonable workload and class size, which only comes with fully funding the Superintendent's budget. It also involves engaging with and listening to teachers, including asking and valuing their opinions.

7. What are three things you feel should be Board priorities in the next one to three years? (Character limit 1500)

The board has lost a great deal of public trust over the past decade, or more. Re-earning the public's trust is essential and can only be done with humility and dedication. Key aspects of doing so involve improving transparency and compliance with the open meetings act. The MPIA database is an important aspect of transparency, but further gains could be made to improve its searchability. Second, there needs to be better communication. For instance, the Board of Education needs to be in the habit of sending e-mail communication for those wanting to know about the addition of meetings, changes in meeting times, and the agenda for both open and closed meetings. It should be easier to find documents and presentations that are uploaded supporting board meetings, for the constituents following along at home. We need to find good ways to communicate with our significant Spanish-speaking population. Additionally, the board needs to find new ways to engage in meaningful two-way dialogue with the community. Lastly, we need to improve the collection and analysis of longitudinal outcomes data. Longitudinal outcomes data show how individual students do year-over-year as opposed to focusing on aggregate trends that can obscure important factors. This is the key to understanding how board decisions influence outcomes, but also what new initiatives are truly needed to increase student achievement.

8. Choose a 2020 local Howard County State Bill and evaluate it. (Character limit 1200)

Senator Lam introduced Ho. Co. 41-20, which would require "that the Board allow a household whose school assignment is changed only in the Board's plan [and not the Superintendent's] to provide public testimony before the final vote." I wrote Senator Lam in late January expressing my concerns that this bill did not go far enough. Families can't testify if they aren't notified. I recommended amending to require:

1. Notification to all households by USPS mail, regardless of whether or not there is currently a student enrolled at that address.
2. Notification to households in polygons when changes are made, presumably by e-mail.

3. Prescribed ways to keep the public updated, for example a single website folks can read to stay up to date that they are notified of in #1.

I also expressed that this should be done in English and Spanish, at a minimum. I wish I had indicated that there is a need to establish criteria for what is considered public testimony, since much of it was not available to the public until weeks after the final vote. Lastly, a better web-based submission form is needed that clearly discloses that the correspondence is public testimony before submitting, not after, as is currently done.

9. How would you as a Board Member, oversee, review and instruct the Superintendent? Give a specific example of each, where the Board of Education and Superintendent have fallen short, and done well. (Character limit 1500)

The text “oversee, review, and instruct” strikes me as both heavy-handed and adversarial, which is not typically a working relationship that I find productive. In my experience, with supervising employees and mentoring graduate students, what works for one rarely works for another. It takes time to identify the strategy that is best for each. I do not know the superintendent personally, to know how to best engage with him. Therefore, early on, I would like to establish a regular, standing in-person meeting with the Superintendent, as well as at least two past or present board members whom I would ask to serve as mentors. These meetings will forge a strong foundation for the interactions related to oversight, review, and direction that are needed over the course of my term.

10. With regard to school redistricting, what do you believe are the three top priorities, in order, that should be considered as reasons to redistrict, or be goals of redistricting? How would you suggest those goals be met? What do you believe was done right and done wrong in the most recent redistricting? (Character limit 1500)

The top three priorities should be: (1) ensuring that redistricting occurs in a legal and ethical manner, (2) reducing capacity to 100% in an equitable manner, and (3) maintaining contiguous school districts that promote the Rouse vision of community and healthy living, including being walkable and bike-able. Where possible, and decisions are equal, we should choose to reduce concentrations of poverty as well as reduce costs.

The high school plan, largely, followed these concepts. The community provided a great deal of input, the board members clearly listened, and the plan changed accordingly.

But the elementary school plan did not:

- State law was broken, as admitted by the board.
- The source for the FARMS data for Bryant Wood Elementary School was not described (Since it is a direct qualifying school, families do not complete FARMS applications.)
- Notification to all families was inadequate
- Notification was not provided in Spanish
- Web-pages stopped being updated and plans were released on social media.

- The capacity numbers were woefully incorrect for Clarksville Elementary School
- The ethics guidelines were not appropriate.

More input should be sought at the very beginning of redistricting about the goals for all stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, staff, administration, and taxpayers), yielding better guidance to the outside consultants, which in turn will yield better plans that ultimately should be the basis of the final plan.

11. Do you believe the HCPSS is serving the needs of the Special Education community? If not, what needs to be changed? Do you believe there is enough funding for Special Education in the current HCPSS budget? Why? (Character limit 1200)

Evidence shows that early intervention is least expensive for the tax payer and most beneficial for the student. More needs to be done to incentivize schools to both identify children who could benefit from intervention and to develop intervention strategies. Schools need to stop being the gatekeepers until the problem escalates to a level that is severe, such that it is harder and more expensive to remedy. Early intervention is the least expensive solution with the best outcomes. For example, as we have heard this past year, one in five children have dyslexia—that means at least 4 kids in most classrooms. Identifying and treating dyslexia early leads to the best outcomes. Children that go un-diagnosed are more difficult to treat and more likely to have social and emotional issues later in life that can interfere with their education, and sometimes the education of others. Our current curriculum does not support the identification of dyslexic children or teaching children in a way that is dyslexic-friendly. Personally, I know the same is true for dysgraphia and inattentiveness. We also need to do more to raise awareness that special education and GT are not mutually exclusive.

12. In what areas of public education do you refuse to compromise, due to strong beliefs? How would you make changes in these areas? Give examples of how you collaborated and compromised with colleagues who disagreed with you. (Character limit 1200)

I am willing to collaborate and compromise on anything except ensuring kids continue to get a great education and ethics/legal issues. I will be unwavering in faithfully fulfilling all ethics and legal obligations.

With respect to collaboration and compromise, as a genome and bioinformatics scientist, I work collaboratively on a daily basis, with diverse individuals across the globe. I routinely co-author manuscripts with dozens of authors, often with diverse views and opinions that need to be reconciled. I am currently working on a manuscript with 30+ authors on all six permanently inhabited continents on a topic in my field that has been controversial for decades. I presented on the topic at our last international meeting, gained support for my proposal for a community-based approach, brought the community together in dialogue to achieve that goal by prioritizing the main concerns, and ultimately our first step in achieving that goal is about to be realized with submission of this manuscript.

13. Give examples in your personal or professional life that demonstrate your willingness to hold people accountable and include transparency for the community. (Character limit 1200)

Following the redistricting vote, I created a web page blog on keeping the Board of Education accountable as a place to provide my own analysis of some of the many issues raised during the course of redistricting and beyond, both with the Board of Education but also with what happened with respect to the County Council. It features long-form articles about important issues, including articles highlighting the irregularities of the votes on the 132s, an article visually illustrating that Howard County is not segregated, an article demonstrating that African American students are performing the same as their Caucasian and Asian peers after accounting for socioeconomics between the groups while Hispanics are not, and an article with an analysis that presents data that suggests race was used as a criteria during elementary school redistricting. I provide them in an open forum, with the opportunity for public critique in order to be open and transparent. I do it to hold our Howard County elected officials accountable.

14. For incumbents, what do you feel is your legacy you have left so far on the HCPSS? For other candidates, what do you want your legacy to be and why are you the best choice to create it? (Character limit 1200)

I want my legacy to be rebuilding the trust of the people of Howard County in the Board of Education. Since I moved to Howard County, over a decade ago, there have been issues with the Board of Education and Superintendent that have eroded the faith of the constituents. We must make this right. My demonstrated commitment to accountability, transparency, rigorous data analysis, and critical thinking are essential to rebuilding this trust.