

Advocacy Corner – 9/17/2024

### Sykesville and Freedom Additions Update

In August 2024, the CC BOE approved plans to add 13 classrooms to Sykesville Middle School and five classrooms to Freedom Elementary School. Sykesville Middle's addition will cost \$17.7 million, of which \$8.7 million will be paid by Carroll County, and increase capacity to 970 students. The construction is scheduled to take place from June 2026 to summer 2028.

Freedom Elementary is also approved for a five classroom addition to bring the capacity to 637 students, still likely below the projected enrollment. The BOE viewed the addition as a "starting point" and portables may still be required to accommodate students. Of the \$7.2 million addition cost, Carroll County will kick in \$4.1 million. Construction at Freedom Elementary is planned for June 2026 to summer 2027. Source: Smith, Thomas Goodwin. "Redistricting possible as projects advance." *Carroll County Times*, 21 August 2024.

### Budget Update

Beginning July 1, 2024, CCPS has an operating budget of \$416.3 million for FY2025, with the County Commissioners allotting \$6 million above the legal funding minimum. When compared to last year, an additional \$19.2 million in the FY2025 budget went to raising employee salaries. Carroll County implemented a \$60,000 starting salary for teachers this year, ahead of the deadline of FY2027. Implementing the increased starting salary early is credited with decreasing the teaching position vacancies compared to previous years.

According to the *Carroll County Times*, the budget "also includes an increase of \$6.9 million due to inflation, \$4.6 million for technology, \$2 million for special education, \$700,000 in state Blueprint requirements and \$400,000 for transportation."

Source: Smith, Thomas Goodwin. "Rolling out new route to kick off new school year." *Carroll County Times*, 4 September 2024.