

## Frederick County Starving its Public Schools

As Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner prepares her budget for release on April 15, the Frederick County Teachers Association released a study that provides an overview of the recent history of county funding for public education titled, "Frederick County: Starving its Public Schools". The report documents the underfunding of the Board of Education, particularly in the last 6 years and also documents the inequity in funding education compared to other county programs even as tax revenues continue to recover from the harsh recession of 2008-2010.

"The Teacher Association fully supports County Executive Gardner's pledge to make education a distinct priority of her administration and to provide funding over the legal minimum allowed by law (known as Maintenance of Effort), starting with the FY16 budget. We also call on the County Council to support this priority and show their commitment to the needs of Frederick County's children and families", said FCTA President Gary Brennan.

The report documents that after bottoming out in FY10, Frederick County's general fund revenues have grown from \$443 million to \$526 million, an increase of \$83 million. Over the same period of time, county spending on the public schools' operating budget grew by just \$2 million. Traditionally, funding for the Frederick County Public School system accounts for nearly half the county's general fund spending, yet FCPS has received just 3% of the county's increase in tax revenues over the past five years. "As a result of this underfunding, the county's share of the overall appropriations for local schools has declined as a percentage of the FCPS budget, even as both income and property tax revenues in the county have increased," Brennan noted.

According to Brennan, "County budget choices over the last 5 years are having a direct and cumulative impact on Frederick County students and schools. FCPS continues to offer the second lowest starting salary for teachers of 24 school systems in our region (and the second lowest in the state of Maryland). Non-competitive salaries remain a problem throughout our pay scale. The starving of the school system budget has also led to an increase in class size scheduled for the next school year and further cuts to education programs and positions as the Board of Education struggles to balance their budget. These cuts will have a direct impact on the education of Frederick County students and are sowing the seeds of a declining, not improving, school system".

"The FCTA report, combined with the recent release by the school system of the Beacon study on the economic value of the Frederick County Public School System ([http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/fcps/Board.nsf/files/9URA995B453D/\\$file/03.25.15%20BEACON%20Study%20Economic%20Value%20FCPS%20Summary\\_backup2.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/mabe/fcps/Board.nsf/files/9URA995B453D/$file/03.25.15%20BEACON%20Study%20Economic%20Value%20FCPS%20Summary_backup2.pdf)), provide a compelling case for improved investments in our schools which are a vital economic and quality of life asset for our county" said Brennan.