

FEBRUARY 2026

Official newsletter of Harford County Education Association

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From the President:



Colleagues,

The school year is chugging along full force, and we know you are overwhelmed and stressed. Some of that is coming from the typical stressors of our jobs, but the uncertainty that surrounds us and the toxicity that is being shared on some social media pages only intensifies your feelings. As someone speaking from experience, I urge you to ignore it. Disregard the keyboard warriors who aren't even willing to use their real names to bash you and your dedication to your profession. The community at large supports educators; unfortunately they are not the loudest people in the room.

Their silly posts and immature tirades don't scare us. We are educators who are committed to our chosen profession, and we will stand strong to support not only our students, but to support one another. We truly are stronger together, and we will prevail.

The dreaded budget cycle where educators are forced to beg year after year in order to meet the basic needs of our students. The HCPS budget ask is not "budgetary malpractice," as stated by our County Executive; it's a necessary ask to meet many state and federal mandates, and, even if this request is fully funded, we will be amongst the lowest funded districts again. We are still waiting for the County Executive to plan his community Town Hall. After numerous requests, a date still hasn't been released. We will notify you immediately. Our attendance is imperative once again this year.

HCEA is currently in the midst of contract negotiations. Both units meet with HCPS again this week. We hope to come to an amicable agreement soon. At this time, proposals have been shared, but no agreement has been met. We will keep our members updated throughout the process.

Thank you for your commitment to HCEA and our profession.

In Solidarity,

Chrystie Crawford-Smick

Contract Spotlight

A CONTRACT IS ONLY AS STRONG AS ITS ENFORCEMENT

Our collective bargaining agreement protects rights, sets standards, and establishes working conditions.

But a contract only has value if it is enforced.

Unaddressed contract violations quickly become accepted practice. Over time, protections erode and expectations expand.

What the CBA provides

- Clear language outlining rights and responsibilities
- A defined process for resolving disputes and violations
- Protections that only work when they are used

Why enforcement matters

- Prevents negotiated rights from quietly disappearing
- Maintains clear and consistent standards across worksites
- Holds the employer accountable to the agreement
- Protects all members, not just individuals who speak up

What enforcement looks like

- Identifying the relevant contract language
- Documenting what is happening
- Attempting informal resolution when appropriate
- Using the grievance procedure outlined in the CBA when necessary



If something does not feel right or does not align with the contract, contact your Building Representative.

BUILDING REP CORNER

All building reps should have received updated membership lists. If there are inaccuracies, please send them to **Lisa Cover**, HCEA Office Manager, at LCover@MSEANea.org.

BEING VISIBLE MATTERS

Being a visible building representative does not mean having all the answers or being everywhere at once. It means members know who you are, how to reach you, and that you are approachable.

Visibility builds trust. When members see you regularly, even in small ways, they are more likely to ask questions early rather than waiting until a problem has escalated.

Visibility can be simple

- Greet colleagues and check in briefly
- Share your contact information at the start of the year
- Attend faculty meetings and listen for concerns
- Follow up after someone mentions an issue
- Remind members you are a resource, even if they are not sure something is a contract issue

Being visible also helps you spot patterns. One concern may feel isolated. Hearing it from multiple people signals a building wide issue that may need attention.

You do not need to solve everything yourself. Visibility is about connection, not pressure. When members trust you, you can help them identify next steps and connect them to a UniServ Director when appropriate.

A visible building representative helps prevent small issues from becoming bigger ones and ensures members know they are not navigating challenges alone.



Members

IN ACTION

Harford County Education Association



Despite the weather,
we had a great turn out
for the HCEA Family
Ice Skating Event! Stay
tuned for our next
family friendly event
coming up in March.





What Contract Negotiations Really Look Like – and How You Can Help

As contract negotiations get underway, many members wonder what actually happens at the bargaining table. While it may not look like what you see on TV, it is an important, structured process where your HCEA bargaining team works hard to advocate for the pay, benefits, and working conditions our members deserve.

When negotiations begin, district administrators and Central Office staff sit on one side of the table, across from our union bargaining team. Each side presents proposals, explains priorities, and discusses concerns. After that initial conversation, the district team typically leaves the room so our team can caucus – a time to review their responses, discuss strategy, and decide next steps. Because district representatives must ultimately take proposals back to the school board for approval, you won't often see final decisions made right at the table. Instead, negotiations move forward through careful discussion, counterproposals, and ongoing communication.

While your bargaining team is leading the conversations, successful negotiations don't happen in isolation. Member involvement makes a real difference. Here are some powerful ways you can support the process:

- Complete HCEA surveys when they're sent out – your feedback helps set bargaining priorities and strengthens our proposals
- Encourage new employees to join the union – a stronger, more unified membership gives us greater collective power
- Speak at school board meetings, especially our Education Support Professionals (ESPs). As a smaller bargaining unit, ESP voices can easily be overshadowed, and personal stories make a big impact
- Write or email school board members to share why fair contracts, competitive pay, and strong working conditions matter to our schools and students
-

Negotiations are most successful when the district sees a united, engaged membership standing behind the bargaining team. Your participation – whether through surveys, attendance, advocacy, or simply encouraging coworkers to get involved – truly strengthens our voice at the table.

Together, we can work toward contracts that respect our work and support our school community.

at the table

Healthcare Negotiations Complete: Standing Strong Together

Our new healthcare agreement secures the benefits our families rely on while avoiding the larger takeaways many other districts and employers are facing. By accepting a modest, predictable adjustment spread over two years, we protect ourselves from sudden spikes and keep every healthcare plan available to all members. At a time when healthcare costs are rising nationwide, our increase will be only a fraction of that—HCPS will absorb the rest—allowing us to maintain one of the best HMO cost-sharing ratios in the state. This collaborative compromise also strengthens our position heading into upcoming negotiations on steps and COLAs, which directly enhance our long-term earnings and pensions.

Joint Healthcare Tentative Agreement

Healthcare Option	2025 - 2026	ACCEPTED CHANGE 2026 - 2027*	ACCEPTED CHANGE 2027 - 2028*
HMO	95%/5% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$20	94%/6% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$25	93%/7% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$25
PPO	90%/10% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$25	89%/11% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$30	88%/12% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$30
Triple Option	85%/15% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$20/\$25 tier 1&2 Deductible: \$50/\$50 Indiv \$100/\$100 Family tier 1&2	83%/17% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$25/\$30 tier 1&2 Deductible: \$75/\$75 Indiv \$150/\$150 Family tier 1&2	81%/19% Split Specialist Co-Pay: \$25/\$30 tier 1&2 Deductible: \$75/\$75 Indiv \$150/\$150 Family tier 1&2

* - Market rate changes are not included and are not negotiated

FEBRUARY 2026

Education in Session

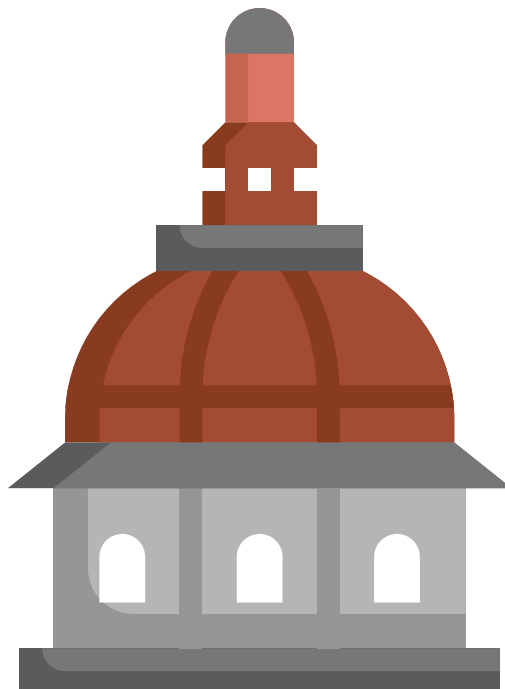
[Click here to see MSEA's priorities this legislative session!](#)

Filing Deadlines are Coming Up!

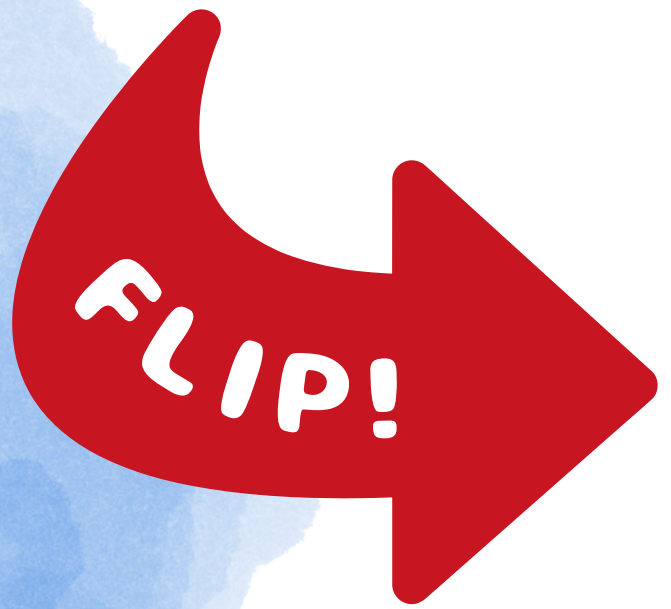
Thinking of running for Central Committee? Know someone who would be great on the Board of Education? In some cases in Harford County, there are fewer people running than there are spots available! If you or someone you know would like more information, please see the links below.

[Central Committees - Harford County Rules for Running](#) - Deadline April 15th, 2026

[Board of Education - Harford County Rules for Running](#) - Deadline February 24th, 2026



TIME FOR A PARTY



Do you want to have power in the primaries?
Do you want to actually affect change here in Harford County?
Do you want a say in who the next County Executive is?

It may be time for a party flip!

If you are currently registered as a Democratic voter in Maryland, you may have faced frustration with elections here in Harford County. It seems as though elections are decided in the Republican primary, not in the general election. The fix? Switch parties!

We're encouraging members living in Harford County who are currently registered as Democrats to switch their party affiliation. This will give us a bigger impact on upcoming elections. And it's SO EASY!

Are you ready? Click [here](#) to access Maryland's State Board of Elections website, where you can change your party today!





Based on guidance from the National Education Association (NEA)

DOs – What Educators Should Do

- Know your rights on duty vs. off duty. You generally have more free speech protections outside of work hours.
- Coordinate with school administrators ahead of time to understand plans and safety expectations. Not following your administrator's directives can lead to a charge of insubordination. If you are uncomfortable with your administrator's plans, have a courageous conversation or contact your UniServ Director.
- Help ensure student safety if the school has approved supervision or designated spaces. This is not the first student organized protest and it won't be the last. **The safety of students is always the priority.**
- The message from HCPS administration is to not engage in any conversation about walkouts with students.

DON'Ts – What Educators Should Avoid

- Do not organize or lead student walkouts.
- Avoid signing student petitions or engaging in advocacy with students during the school day.
- Do not act or speak in ways that suggest you represent the school or district's official position.

Important Notes

- Educators typically have broader rights when acting as private citizens off campus and off duty.
- District policies and state laws may place limits on activity during work hours.
- When in doubt, consult your union representative for guidance.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 3: HCEA Board of Directors

February 9: HCPS BoE Meeting

February 12: HCEA Rep Assembly

February 23: HCPS BoE Meeting



AMERICAN COLLEGE *of* EDUCATION®

ACE Partner Webinar

American College of Education is a low-cost, high-quality online college offering accessible programs to help you advance your career. Join us to learn more about your exclusive partner benefits, including tuition reduction grants. We'll also share program information and answer your questions.



Marlena Wiley

marlena.wiley@ace.edu
Partner Engagement
Administrator

February 12

7 pm ET

Scan the QR code or click the arrow below to register. If you cannot attend live, please register and a recording will be sent after the event.



REGISTER NOW





DRD Pool Management, Inc. is accepting
resumes for summer job openings as
Swimming Pool Field Supervisors
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No Experience Necessary

For more information, email
Allen Watts awatts@drdpools.com

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410-272-4000



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Federally insured by NCUA
Membership eligibility applies.

PROTECT YOURSELF!

IF YOU ARE INJURED AT WORK:

1. Report it to your supervisor.
2. Document the injury completely.
3. Seek medical attention from the doctor of your choice.
4. Call BSG Law at 800-827-2667 to discuss your legal rights.

SOLELY REPORTING THE ACCIDENT TO THE COUNTY WILL NOT PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS!

Protect your rights by filing a workers' compensation claim with the State of Maryland.

Contact BSG Law at 800-827-2667 to protect your rights!

nea NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION NEA Approved!

BSGLAW.COM | 800-827- 2667

BSG
BERMAN | SOBIN | GROSS LLP

HCEA Sponsored Long-term Care Insurance

- Offering long-term care insurance to HCEA members and their families
- Helping members protect their hard-earned assets
- Giving members a way to remain in control of their healthcare choices
- Providing members with peace-of-mind

For a no obligation consult and quote, contact

Michael Markowitz- 410-455-0680
Mike.Markowitz@acsiapartners.com



MOVIE TICKETS

Discounted Horizon Movie Tickets



HCEA Member Benefit-Horizon Movie Tickets \$9.00 each

Please call or email Lisa Cover to order tickets- 410-838-0800 x200
lcover@mseanea.org



SHOW SOME

LOVE

TO

UHCCF!

**SUPPORT YOUR UNION AT THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING!**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2026 • 6:00 PM

CHESAPEAKE WELCOME CENTER

[Click here to sign up
to speak in support of
our union siblings!](#)

HCEA supports UHCCF in their
fight for a fair contract!

**STAND
STRONG!**

**WE
UHCCF**

If you need assistance, please contact
your HCEA UniServe Director.

Allison Heintz: 410-816-5025

aheintz@mseanea.org

Roxanne Rife: 202-594-6525

rrife@mseanea.org

NEED HELP?

HCEA School Split 2025-2026

Allison Heintz

aheintz@mseanea.org

410-816-5025

Roxanne Rife

rrife@mseanea.org

202-594-6525

1. Bel Air High School

2. Bel Air Elementary School
3. Bel Air Middle School
4. Emmorton Elementary School
5. Homestead/Wakefield Elementary School

6. Fallston High School

7. Fallston Middle School
8. Forest Hill Elementary School
9. Forest Lakes Elementary School
10. Hickory Elementary School
11. Jarrettsville Elementary School
12. Red Pump Elementary School
13. Youth's Benefit Elementary School

14. Joppatowne High School

15. Joppatowne Elementary School
16. Magnolia Elementary School
17. Magnolia Middle School
18. Riverside Elementary School

19. North Harford High School

20. Dublin Elementary
21. Norrisville Elementary School
22. North Bend Elementary School
23. North Harford Elementary School
24. North Harford Middle School
25. Darlington Elementary School

26. C Milton Wright High School

27. Fountain Green Elementary School
28. Churchville Elementary School
29. Prospect Mill Elementary School
30. Southampton Middle School

1. Aberdeen High School

2. Aberdeen Middle School
3. Bakerfield Elementary School
4. Church Creek Elementary School
5. George D. Lisby Elementary
6. Halls Cross Roads Elementary School
7. Royce-Williams Elementary School

8. Edgewood High School

9. Abingdon Elementary School
10. Edgewood Elementary School
11. Edgewood Middle School
12. Deerfield Elementary School
13. Old Post Road Elementary School

14. Patterson Mill High School

15. Patterson Mill Middle School
16. William S. James Elementary School
17. Ring Factory Elementary School

18. Havre de Grace High School

19. Havre de Grace Middle School
20. Meadowvale Elementary School
21. Havre de Grace Elementary School
22. Harford Academy

23. Harford Technical High School

24. Central Office

25. Harford Glen

26. Swan Creek

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DISCIPLINE MEETINGS

If you are asked to attend a meeting that may be disciplinary in nature and would like your UniServ Director present, please contact us right away. According to both contracts, you must be given at least 2 business days to get representation.

However, if admin refuses to reschedule, **you must go to the meeting** so you do not face discipline for insubordination.

Just state that you will take notes and write down questions that you will answer after conferring with your rep.