Jennifer Meacham

From: Taylor Bensley Komar
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2026 12:19 PM
To: Jennifer Meacham
Subject: FW: Requesting Priority Funding for a New School Building and Auditorium Sprung Floor
Attachments: 1000046855.jpg; 1000046864.jpg; 1000046863.jpg; 1000046853.jpg; 1000046861.jpg; 1000046865.jpg; 1000046851.jpg; 1000046852.jpg; 1000046926.jpg; 1000046866.jpg; 1000046849.jpg

CIP request from Overlea High School PTSA

From: PTSA at Overlea High School, Inc. <ohsfalconptsa@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2026 12:14 PM
To: Taylor Bensley Komar <tbensley@baltimorecountymd.gov>
Subject: Requesting Priority Funding for a New School Building and Auditorium Sprung Floor

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Good morning, members of the Board, district leadership, and community members.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input for the upcoming capital improvement projects budget.

Today, I am compelled to bring awareness about an issue that deserves our immediate attention: the need to prioritize funding for a new school building and the installation of a sprung floor in our auditorium at Overlea High School.

Our school community deserves a safe, healthy, and modern learning environment. Unfortunately, our current facilities are facing serious infrastructure challenges that can no longer be addressed through temporary repairs alone. Our school is currently at 146% capacaity, exceeding the state rated capacity by 36%. We have 18 trailers and projections for school year 2026-27 reflect increases in enrollment. In addition to the extremely overcrowded conditions we also are facing declining infrastructure to the facility. Failing building systems to include but not limited to: inability to regulate the temperature in the building, peeling paint and black mold in our auditorium, and the presence of lead in our water raise significant concerns about the health, safety, and well-being of our students, staff, and everyone who enters our building.

The safety of our students and staff must remain our highest priority. The placement of students in trailers located in a village-like arrangement behind our school presents additional safety and wellness challenges. Our school building is adjacent to two public MTA bus stops, and traffic congestion and numerous traffic accidents during peak commuting hours have affected students. Students have been struck by cars traveling at excessive speeds through the 5400 block of Kenwood Avenue. Timely arrival to school had been impacted by the strained roadways due to more overcrowding. We have also

experienced incidents involving trespassers entering the school campus and, on occasion, the trailers themselves—including an incident involving an individual reportedly carrying a loaded weapon and drugs. These circumstances raise serious concerns about campus security and the safety of our students.

Students assigned to trailers face additional challenges when they need to use the restroom during class. Depending on the trailer's location, students may have to walk more than five minutes to reach the main building in varied weather conditions, where entry doors are locked upon arrival. This distance, combined with access restrictions and the surrounding safety concerns, creates an unreasonable barrier to timely restroom access and raises concerns about student health, dignity, and well-being.

Access to safe drinking water and a structurally sound, properly maintained school building should never be treated as optional or postponed until funding becomes available. Our athletics director has had to refill water cooler jugs at her own residence to help mitigate concerns about contaminated drinking water. Coaches have also purchased bottled water out of their own pockets to ensure that students participating in high school athletic programs have access to safe drinking water during practices and competitions. These measures reflect the lack of a reliable, school-provided alternative to the building's water supply.

Safe facilities, secure learning environments, reasonable restroom access, and clean drinking water are fundamental requirements—not luxuries. Students should not have to face unnecessary safety risks or lack access to basic necessities to attend school and participate in educational and athletic activities. These essential conditions must be addressed to ensure an environment where children can learn, teachers can teach, and families can have confidence in the school entrusted with their children.

For these reasons, I am asking that our school be given priority status in the district's capital improvement and facilities funding plan so that the construction of a new school building can move forward as urgently as possible.

While maintenance and repairs may provide temporary relief, they cannot always offer a lasting solution when a school's underlying infrastructure is deteriorating. A new school building would provide an opportunity to address longstanding overcrowding, facility concerns, improve health and safety conditions, modernize learning spaces, and create an environment that serves students, educators, and the community for generations to come.

The recent auditorium renovation illustrates these concerns. Despite the improvements, the installation appears lackluster, and the resulting work on the surrounding existing structures appears to rely on patchwork rather than a comprehensive, long-term solution. (See attached photographs documenting the conditions following the auditorium renovation.)

Baltimore County Public Schools must do better for our students and staff. Our school community deserves facilities that are safe, well-maintained, and built to support educational excellence—not recurring repairs that may leave underlying problems unresolved creating significant public health risks.

I also ask that funding for a sprung floor in our auditorium be included in the project's planning and budget. After a 2.1 million dollar investment, our staff and students were left standing and dancing on concrete flooring, soiled and discolored tiles in the ceiling, and mismatched tile flooring throughout the auditorium.

Our auditorium is more than a room with a stage. It is a gathering place where students develop confidence, showcase their talents, participate in performances, celebrate achievements, and build connections with one another. It is an important part of our school's educational and cultural life.

A properly designed sprung floor would provide appropriate shock absorption and support for dance, movement, and other performance activities. It would help create a safer, more functional space for students and staff while expanding opportunities for the performing arts. This investment would demonstrate that we value not only academic achievement, but also creativity, physical well-being, and the whole-child approach to education.

I recognize that school districts must make difficult decisions about limited resources and competing needs. However, I urge you to consider the long-term costs of delaying necessary improvements. Continued repairs to aging infrastructure can become increasingly expensive, and postponing major investments can leave students and staff living with unacceptable conditions for longer than necessary posing greater health risks.

Investing in a new school building is not simply an expense. It is an investment in public health, educational opportunity, staff retention, student achievement, and the future of our community. Including the sprung auditorium floor in the planning process is an opportunity to build a facility that serves the full range of our students' needs from the very beginning.

I respectfully ask the Planning Board and district leadership to take three concrete steps:

- Prioritize funding for a new school building based on the urgency of our overcrowding, failing infrastructure and the need to provide a safe, healthy learning environment.
- Address the lead-in-water concern with urgency and transparency, including appropriate testing, clear communication with families and staff, and effective interim measures to protect everyone in the building while permanent solutions are pursued.
- Include a sprung floor in the auditorium's project scope and budget so that our performing arts spaces are safe, functional, and designed to meet the needs of our students which would reveal a true commitment to prioritizing the health and well-being of our students and staff.

Our students should not have to wait for another budget cycle to have their basic health and safety concerns taken seriously. Our staff should not have to continue working in deteriorating conditions when a long-term solution is needed. And our community should not have to choose between a safe school and a school that supports the full educational experience of every child.

We have an opportunity to make a meaningful and lasting difference. By prioritizing this project now, we can move beyond temporary fixes and begin building a safer, healthier, and more inspiring future for our school community.

I ask you to treat this request with the urgency it deserves, to make this project a funding priority, and to provide a clear timeline for the next steps toward making it a reality.

Our children deserve facilities that reflect the value we place on their education, their health, their safety, and their potential.

Let us invest in their future by giving this project the priority it needs and deserves.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your commitment to our students and school community.

Thank you,
Crystal Mercer, President
Board Member
PTSA at Overlea High School, Inc.


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