

**Remarks of Nancy Trainer on Proposed FY 2026 FCPS School Budget
on behalf of the Education Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
February 4, 2025—Fairfax County School Board Meeting**

My name is Nancy Trainer, and I am speaking on behalf of and as the co-chair of the Education Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations.

We want to be on record that we object to this year's budget process on two grounds.

First, we object that the School Board doesn't seem to be taking its public responsibilities seriously. You should have a crucial role representing the public in the creation of a budget that reflects our community's priorities and values. This year the County Executive will present the County's Advertised Budget *before* the School Board has created its own Advertised Budget. So the full School Board will have no meaningful role in the County's budget process. That means we, the public, are not being represented by you.

This impression was reinforced when the Board unanimously ratified a collective bargaining agreement which promises a 7% across-the-board raise, knowing that the County faces a projected shortfall close to \$300M this year. These are not serious conversations. Your simplistic negotiation tactic of "anchoring high" is backfiring. It makes you look unsophisticated and unreasonable. Yet you continue to do this year after year. You are failing to represent the nuanced views of your community—which you barely give us an opportunity to provide.

This brings us to our second objection: the process for public input on the budget is disrespectfully performative rather than meaningful. We cannot provide meaningful input into a \$4 billion budget when we are given less than two weeks to digest it. We cannot provide meaningful input in general when we are given less than two minutes to speak on any given matter.

In 2016 more than 90 individuals or organizations signed up with FCPS to testify regarding the Advertised Budget. How many are here tonight? We are not alone in rejecting this process as irrelevant. It would be great to see the public rise up and demand better funding from Richmond. If that's what you want, then we need to believe we are your partners. We do not. You can and must do better.