

# The People's Voice, LLC

## Ethics Ballot <sup>TM</sup>

3205 B Corporate Court Ellicott City, MD 21042

### 2018 Howard County Questionnaire Board of Education Candidates

Candidate: Chao Wu

1. Why are you running for this office? What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office?

I am an ordinary parent who cares about the quality of HCPSS education and want to make an impact to improve many aspects of our education system.

I have been actively involved with the school system. I served on the BOE Operating Budget Review Committee (OBRC). I have testified on multiple issues during Board of Education hearings including later school starting time and school redistricting. Most recently I provided suggestions to the school regarding transportation optimization. I have been an active participant in CAC and my local PTA meetings. I also testified on APFO in front of county council since I believe APFO will affect our education system significantly.

I have been elected twice as a Board Member of Columbia Association and River Hill Village Association. I am a strong proponent of fiscal health and great customer service for Columbia Association. I care deeply about both the origination health and residents feedback as CA board member.

I was educated in three different education systems, China, Singapore and USA. My unique international education experience gives a multi-dimensional perspective and approaches while looking at issues and solving problems.

Originated from my training as an engineer, I am always looking for optimal and practical solutions to problems that I have encountered. I will bring this experience to the BOE board. I strongly believe that with good education and hard-working spirit, our students will find a great future for themselves after graduating from HCPSS.

2. Describe why you feel you have a viable campaign.

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I am a candidate who has the passion to improve our education, has the management experience for very large non-profit organization (Board Member of Columbia Association) and I have a strong campaign team working with me. My campaign signs are spreading out the whole county due to my volunteers' hard work. We will take multiple approaches to engage with our voters.

I have a strong community support. I am the only candidate who receives the most (almost 200 donations) and small donations (majority of them are no more than 100 dollars) from individual community members.

I am truly grateful for their time and financial support. I strongly believe an active community engagement is part of BOE work.

### 3. How do you believe one eliminates the appearance of conflicts regarding campaign contributions?

I will not take any donations from builders and developers or any companies doing business with HCPSS or the County Government. I believe our newspaper, civic society, local bloggers and every concerned citizen should reveal such kind suspicious activities for every politicians.

### 4. If you are elected, what are your top priorities for 2019? Discuss at least three areas of concern for The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and how you would address them.

My top three priorities would be:

- 1: fix the deficit problem,
- 2: increase board collaboration,
- 3: provide equitable opportunities for students and motivate students to learn.

### 5. What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the current Board of Education, and Superintendent?

Overall I am satisfied with the current superintendent. I am not quite satisfied with the current Board of Education. I know the current board inherited difficulties from previous BOE and superintendent, but our BOE should have a better vision for the future, increase collaboration with stakeholders and provide continues, short and long term guidance on HCPSS development. One very example is the budget request. The board and the superintendent already know they would not be able to get all the funding from the county government and county council, they acted like previous board and kicked the budget ball back and force.

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**6. How would you exercise oversight of the HCPSS budget, after it has been approved?**

The board should be given quarterly even monthly report on the budget and spending. The board should also have a stricter auditing process and higher quality than before.

The board should have a closer look at cost-saving approaches. The board should always evaluate program efficiency and take our stakeholders' feedback seriously.

**7. The HCPSS has experienced less socio-economic diversity of population in schools. Discuss related concerns and how you would address them. Include your ideas about how to provide equity in the HCPSS.**

I believe equity is great and is an achievable goal for our community. HCPSS should utilize resources accordingly to make sure every student has the opportunity to succeed. We should motivate students to excel and families to get involved with their children's growth. School alone could not solve the social-economic diversity issue. We need get the families, PTAs, civic society to join this great effort. I strongly support vocational schools which provide options for students and families who would like pursue of vocational training. I believe this will provide more equitable opportunities for those who are in need of it.

**8. Do you believe the HCPSS budget should have a lower level of increase, or be fully funded? If fully funded, where do you suggest the County budget cut elsewhere to accommodate? If lowered, where do you suggest the HCPSS budget be cut?**

As a BOE candidate, I definitely believe the county should fully fund the HCPSS budget if there is enough funding from the county government. This is the difficult time (accumulated 50 million dollars budget deficit and increasing demand for better education) the county government and HCPSS should work hand-in-hand because inherited problem from previous superintendent. I believe the county government should cut programs which do not achieve the program objectives and do not benefit enough people.

I firmly believe HCPSS should not cut any teachers because of this temporary funding problem.

**9. Where do you think the next high school(s) should be built? Why? In what order?**

Since high school #13 was selected at Mission Road already by the current BOE, I believe HCPSS should push for High School #14 at Troy Park or other possible locations to help the east side of the county. The school should be built where students reside. The board should begin the process now.

**10. How would you remediate overcrowding in schools?**

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The BOE should make sure to use every method to address school overcrowding, increase facility utilization rate in every school, slow down or stop increasing the portable classrooms gradually.

Since the board approved high school #13 at Mission road, the board should continue look for high school 14. It should make sure high school #13 will be completed on time with quality and make sure the elementary school in Turf Valley be on track.

The board should make sure we build schools where the students are residing. It should always have a long term vision on the growing student population, prepare and plan for this growth.

**11. What time do you think Elementary, Middle and High Schools in the HCPSS should start the day? If any changes are proposed, how would you accommodate funding needs to implement?**

I do believe all schools should open between 8:00-9:30. This is not easy to be implemented considering the current financial deficit. After the deficit is fixed, we should allocate money for technology improvement and route optimization. Another possibility could be for HCPSS to gradually build a lean school bus fleet for key routes. Smaller bus, uber style transportation, etc should also be considered. In the future, autonomous bus fleet can be considered too. Funding for transportation, optimization for transportation, and cost of transportation should always be part of the budget discussion.

**12. Do you believe that local Boards of Education in MD should have the right to terminate their Superintendents for cause? If the law changes, what procedures do you suggest for retaining due process?**

Yes. I believe the BOE should have the right to terminate the superintendent contract for cause. If the law changes, I believe a majority vote (4-3) for termination is not good because 4-3 is a little divisive and easy to achieve and the current board has some very important votes which resulted in 4-3. The board should try to achieve a consensus, but not a unanimous vote. So we probably need a 5-2 vote to terminate the superintendent contract for school stability purpose because we want to make sure the board takes the contract termination very seriously and have a majority of the board members to vote for the termination.

**13. Do you believe the Board of Education members should be elected countywide or by district? Why? If by district, which type of districting system is best? Do you believe concerns about accountability are more easily addressed with districting?**

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I believe BOE members should be elected countywide. I am afraid electing them by district will create a partisan fight for the school board and BOE candidates will create a slate with county council candidates. I also worry about this will create tension between different districts and pit schools against each other. I don't believe accountability can be more easily addressed with electing them by district. By electing them countywide, we will have more BOE members standing in the middle of policies.

**14. What percentage of overcapacity do you think should close schools to development in the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance? The maximum number of years of halting development in an overcrowded school is 4, should that number be changed? If so, why?**

Under current situation, we should have 100% percentage or even less in APFO, otherwise school capacity will never catch up with the student growth. The maximum number of years of halting development in an overcrowded school should be increased to slow down the student population growth.

**15. What is your position on the burden of proof in Special Education litigation?**

I believe the school and parent should build a mutual respect and understanding first. Litigation should be always the last step. The burden of proof should lie on the school side because the school system has the record and resources of proof.

**16. What is your position regarding cell phone usage by students in school?**

I believe for elementary school, we should not allow cellphone usage. For middle and high schools, because of many out school activities, a limited usage should be considered.

It is always not easy to handle the situation as technology is penetrating more into people's daily life. For elementary school student, we want them focus more in the classroom. For older students, there is a true need because they have many outside classroom activities and we want them to learn how to be a responsible cellphone user.

**17. Describe positions you have taken, or votes you have made which you feel are the most important with regard to the position you seek. Describe how you championed these causes or how you publicized your position. Please also include information on any position or vote you made that you regret, or about which you feel differently.**

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While I was voting for the FY 2019-2020 Columbia Association Budget in February, I was a seeking common ground for CA as whole. I discussed the budget issue with other fellow board members, consulted with River Hill Village board members and many county residents. For me, CA should provide sufficient and satisfactory service for our residents while being fiscally conscience, being efficient and effective in its programs.

**18. What specific actions have you taken that benefited the community, either as an elected official or as a county resident? Have you ever testified before the Howard County Board of Education? If so, describe positions you have taken.**

One example what I have taken as an elected official (Board Member of Columbia Association) benefiting the community is the Columbia Gym longer operating hour. In the past, Columbia Gym closed pretty earlier. With continuous communication with CA staff, we have a much longer operation hour. Many members are very supportive on this.

I have been consistently attending the BOE board meetings. And I testified in front of BOE numerous times on important issues that face HCPSS students and their families.

**19. If you had to make School Budget cuts, what are the top three things you would NOT cut and the top three things you would? Why?**

This is a very difficult choice for me. If BOE have to cut programs, I will make sure the school funds all programs which are legally required by the law. Anything outside the scope should be reevaluated based on the purpose, past performance, cost efficiency, return of investment and many more factors. When cut needs to happen, all status-quo or establishment forces will come out against the cut. As a board member, I will make sure objective opinions prevail.

The top three things I would not cut: teachers, school safety and transportation.

**20. How would you improve detection and response to bullying?**

We should be honest that bullying does happen on HCPSS campus and we should seek to minimize bullying. Whenever there is a bullying problem, we should make sure student, teachers, staff and parents know it, understand how it is resolved, then the community will know how to prevent bullying happening in the future. If they know bully can be prevented, they will be more inclined to report it and then solve it.

By Authority, The People's Voice PAC, Lisa Markovitz, Treasurer