



Henrico County Public Schools Statement from Dr. Amy E. Cashwell

Providing a safe and comfortable learning and working environment for every student and employee is a primary responsibility of Henrico County Public Schools. The ongoing HVAC issues have fallen short of that expectation; however, the division is making progress with short-term repairs and long-term operational changes to improve reliability.

The challenges with our facilities did not develop overnight. Over time, the school division has worked to balance HVAC investments and other essential needs such as school security, building renovations, roofing, technology and other improvements that directly impact student and employee safety. Simply focusing on one area does not negate critical needs in others.

For many years, the Capital Improvement Plan included \$2.5 million for mechanical and roofing projects combined. That funding was used to support a wide range of needs across all our schools, including heating and cooling, plumbing, electrical work and roofing. Recognizing the growing demands of maintaining 7-million square feet of building space and the complex systems of aging facilities, the School Board advocated for increased funding in FY22, FY23 and FY24.

We are fortunate to have strong partners on the Henrico County Board of Supervisors and a County Manager who share our commitment to our schools. Their support resulted in increases to CIP funding for mechanical and roofing projects from \$2.5 million in previous years to \$10 million in FY25, \$16 million in FY26, and \$20 million this year. The School Board and I are grateful for their partnership and our collective understanding that the growing needs of our schools require a significant investment.

Meals tax revenue has been an instrumental component of our work, as a source of funding for hundreds of projects, including HVAC improvements, upgraded security systems, and safer entrances to school buildings, just to name a few. And, since 2020, Henrico County Public Schools has leveraged federal pandemic relief grants to address much-needed equipment replacements, ventilation upgrades and building automation systems. With these one-time funds, the school division accelerated air quality and mechanical system work that would otherwise have required additional local funds.

That said, we must also acknowledge that funding is only part of the solution. How projects are prioritized, where the money is invested and how we proactively maintain our school buildings are just as important. To that end, the school division is reorganizing the Facilities Department to create separate oversight of capital planning and maintenance operations. We continue to expand partnerships with contracted vendors and are overhauling how maintenance work orders are tracked and closed. An independent, third-party organizational assessment will help identify other opportunities to improve efficiency. And that is our commitment to our families, employees and the taxpayers of Henrico County: to build a more strategic, proactive and reliable facilities operation that they can depend on.