The Honorable Stephanie Smith
House Appropriations Committee
Education and Economic Development Subcommittee
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Nancy King
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Baltimore City Community College Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget

Dear Chair Smith and Chair King:

Governor Moore's budget demonstrates his vision and Maryland's commitment to education and to Baltimore City Community College (BCCC). The Governor's focus on education is a testimony to his priorities which will impact the economic and workforce growth for the State. The College is dedicated to providing the students of Baltimore City and surrounding areas with affordable higher education and maintaining a steady focus on college completion, transfer preparation, and workforce training. With your support, BCCC has been deliberate in its efforts to keep tuition and fees stable and within the reach of the demographic we serve. BCCC remains one of the most affordable community colleges in the State with one of the lowest tuition rates. Since the Fall of 2017, the College has held the current level of tuition and offers its "in-county" tuition rate of $110 per credit for all Maryland residents, not just Baltimore City residents.

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, BCCC awarded 436 degrees and certificates. Through its 34 degree and 19 certificate programs, the College served 5,697 credit students during FY 2024**, an increase of 16% over FY 2023**. In Fall 2024, BCCC increased its credit enrollment by 436 students which is 11% higher than Fall 2023. Enrollment for the Winter term 2025 increased by 26% over the final enrollment for Winter 2024. The Spring 2025 enrollment is currently 4,119 which is a 14% increase over the final enrollment for Spring 2024.

The demographic and socioeconomic characteristics make full-time enrollment challenging for the majority of BCCC's students: 52% of credit students are 25 years of age or older and 48% are employed at least 20 hours per week. Of the students who responded to the Spring 2022 Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 43% reported having children that live with them. Ongoing concerns about childcare, transportation, health care, food insecurities and housing pose consistent threats toward students completing programs of study.

BCCC has supported City Schools' Pathways in Technology Early College High Schools (P-TECH) since 2016. The College continues to enroll high school students in our associate degree programs while they complete their high school diploma. P-TECH is currently offered at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School, Carver Vocational-Technical High School, and Digital Harbor High School. P-TECH students focus on specific pathways leading to an associate degree and employment in the career field of their choice including Healthcare, Information Technology, and Transportation and Supply Chain Management.

The College expanded its focus on recruitment which includes Baltimore City middle schools and Baltimore County public high schools, as well as conducting recruitment events in other Maryland counties (i.e., Anne Arundel, Carroll County, Howard County) within the State. This aligns with the recent change in the eligibility requirements for the Mayor's Scholars Program (MSP) which allows any

recent Maryland high school graduate to be eligible to participate. In the past, MSP was specific to Baltimore City residents. Three recruiter positions have been filled who are actively engaging with external partners. New partnerships have been established with nine high schools. In 2023, the College reclassified its Director of Dual Enrollment position to the Assistant Dean of Early College Access Programs.

Academic Programming

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future (the Blueprint) is one of the most robust and comprehensive plans in the history of Maryland's public education system. As Public Schools officials advance the implementation of the plan, BCCC continues to collaborate as a partner. The Blueprint is elevating the stature of the teaching profession through the implementation of a career ladder, competitive salaries, including raising starting pay up to $60,000 and incentives for National Board-Certified teachers up to $17,000, as well as raising expectations for teacher preparation, induction, and mentoring programs to attract and retain high-quality teachers.

BCCC and Baltimore City Public Schools have partnered to address the developmental needs of City School students who do not meet the State's College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards as outlined in the Blueprint. The Assistant Dean of Early College and Access Programs, a team of BCCC Reading and English faculty members, and a team from the City Schools are working to align English 10 State standards, curriculum, and Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) with BCCC's developmental Reading and English courses to better prepare students who do not meet CCR standards by the end of tenth grade. In addition, faculty math teams from BCCC and City Schools are working on the curriculum design for the new developmental math course. The College is hiring new faculty with experience in developing high school math curricula.

The Maryland Educator Shortage Reduction Act went into effect. Part of the act includes providing access for students who are in their first or second year of post-secondary education and are working toward a teaching degree. To be eligible for funding support, they must attend a school where 40% of students receive federal Pell grants. BCCC is one of only six schools in Maryland that meet eligible criteria.

Realignment Task 9 directed the College to address the information technology (IT) and infrastructure needs of BCCC. To increase operational efficiencies, BCCC implemented a new integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to replace the College's legacy student information and administrative systems. The new system, Banner, has fostered an environment that supports positive student learning experiences and focuses on recruiting, retaining and graduating students. BCCC is working closely with the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT) to ensure timely and successful completion of project milestones. The Human Resources, Student, Finance, Financial Aid, and Student Accounting modules became operational in 2022. In 2024, BCCC and Ellucian partnered for the next phase to begin advisory services for each module to address remaining questions related to the implementation.

Since 2017, BCCC has continued to implement the 12 Realignment Tasks that the legislature mandated for the College. The College provides periodic reports on the status of the 12 Tasks which are focused on improving student success and operational efficiencies. The first Joint Chairman's Report was submitted in November 2018 and Realignment updates are provided to the Board of Trustees during monthly open session meetings. Updates to the College community are also provided during the President's Forums and professional development sessions throughout the year. The College is integrating the Realignment Tasks into the 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, as reflected in the BCCC Self-Study submitted to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) in March 2024. The College hosted a successful reaccreditation peer evaluation site visit for its MSCHE reaccreditation process in late spring 2024 and received notification of its reaffirmation in November 2024. The next Self-Study will occur in 2031-32.

The strategic planning process is underway with the partnership of Credo, a consultant, along with the implementation of Strategic Planning Online (SPOL), a platform designed to create a comprehensive, centralized, and sustainable tool to support strategic planning development, key performance indicators, and institutional effectiveness.

With the engagement between the faculty and administration, President McCurdy convened a Shared Governance Planning Council and charged it to "Examine the process of decision-making at the College and make (rational, practical and realistic) recommendations to the Board of Trustees for an inclusive, transparent and participatory governance structure." Shared Governance applies to the entire College and includes matters related to planning, policy, procedures and programs. The Council has been meeting monthly throughout academic year 2024-25.

The College is committed to supporting the State of Maryland and the City of Baltimore to provide vital educational and training opportunities. Thank you for your continued support of higher education and Baltimore City Community College.

Sincerely,

Debra L. McCurdy, PhD
President

cc:
Members of the Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee
Members of the Education and Economic Development Subcommittee

Mission
Baltimore City Community College provides quality, affordable, and accessible education meeting the professional and personal goals of a diverse population, changing lives, and building communities.

Vision
Baltimore City Community College is an innovator in providing quality career pathways and educational opportunities for a diverse population of learners to exceed the challenges of an ever-changing competitive workforce and environment.

OPERATING BUDGET RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Operating Budget Summary

Key Observations

Context:
Enrollment Increases: In fall 2024, BCCC enrollment increased for the second consecutive year with an increase of 10.0%, or 436 students, compared to fall 2023. While enrollment remains below prepandemic levels at 10.9% below fall 2019 enrollment, fall 2024 marks the highest enrollment since that year.

Enrollment and the Mayor's Scholars Program (MSP): Full-time equivalent student (FTES) enrollment increased the first time since fiscal 2019, with an increase of 25.0% between fiscal 2023 and 2024. The FTES enrollment is expected to increase in fiscal 2025 reflective of the fall 2024 enrollment increase. The second-year retention rates for the fall 2021 and 2022 MSP cohorts were 14% and 71%, respectively.

Comment:
Adopt committee narrative requesting a report on enrollment and the Mayor's Scholars Program.

Response:
Baltimore City Community College adopts the Committee's narrative as noted on the Operating Budget Recommended Actions section of the FY 2026 Operating Budget Analysis. BCCC will submit the enrollment and Mayor's Scholars Report no later than December 15, 2025.

The College would like to note one correction from the FY26 analysis. BCCC's credit enrollment increased by 11% and not 10% for fall 2024.

Proposed Deficiency Appropriation

Context:
The fiscal 2025 adjusted working appropriation includes one proposed deficiency of $3.1 million in current restricted funds to provide funds for student services.

Comment:
The President should comment on how the additional funds will be expended.

Response:

In 2024 for FY 2025, Baltimore City Community College received an extension for the HEERF funds from the U.S. Department of Education. The College has until June 30, 2025, to spend those funds. The HEERF funds will be utilized to assist our students with textbooks, access codes, shipping costs for the textbooks and tuition and fees. In addition, each classroom will be upgraded to provide instructional technology, equipment, and furniture.

BCCC's Funding Formula

Context:

The previous fiscal year used the FTES count as reported by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), but this year's figure is the amount as reported by BCCC. There is a difference of 404 FTES between the figures reported by the two agencies. Although the cause of the inconsistency should be determined, the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) notes that the hold harmless clause would have been triggered under either count.

Comment:

BCCC should comment on how it will work with MHEC to ensure a consistent reporting of their FTES. What are the sources for the 404 FTES?

Response:

BCCC agrees that the reporting of FTES in Exhibit 5 appears to be inconsistent.

BCCC submits its eligible and ineligible FTES to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) annually via the CC-2 Report and CC-3 file. Subsequently, MHEC issues a Transmittal Report confirming the FTES and an external audit firm conducts a review of more detailed supporting documentation. Upon completion of the audit, the CC-4 Report is completed by the College with the audit firm's expressed opinion (which confirms the financial statements are presented fairly and in compliance) and submitted to MHEC and the State of Maryland's General Accounting Division. For State aid, the eligible credit and continuing education FTES are used for funding calculations.

Exhibit 5 shows the FTES under "2025 Working" as 2,553 which reflects FY 2023 eligible credit and non-credit FTES plus ineligible credit FTES. For FY 2023, BCCC reported eligible credit and continuing education FTEs of 2,447.04 to MHEC via the FY 2023 CC-2 Report and CC-3 file, as reflected in the College's audited FY 2023 CC-4 Report. FTES under "2026 Allowance" show 2,040 FTES which reflects FY 2024 eligible and ineligible credit FTES. BCCC reported 3,047.54 eligible credit and continuing education FTES via its FY 2024 CC-2 and CC-3 submissions which is reflected in MHEC's FY 2024 transmittal report. With the actual eligible FTES, the "2025-2026 Change" would be +599.5 which is an increase of 24.5% (rather than –513, a decrease of 20.1%).

Personnel Data

Context:

As of December 31, 2024, BCCC had 103 more vacant positions than would be needed to meet its budgeted turnover rate and a vacancy rate of 32.0%. At the same time last year, BCCC had 105 vacancies above the number needed to meet turnover and a 32.5% vacancy rate.

Comment:

The President should comment on the continued high vacancy rate, efforts to reduce vacant positions, and the effect that the vacancies are having on the college's ability to meet its goals.

Response:

Several factors contributed to the 32.5% vacancy rate. Retirements and resignations continue to play a significant role in the elevated vacancy rate. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce notes the latest data

shows that we have 8 million job openings in the U.S. but only 6.8 million unemployed workers. Even though there are more Americans participating in the workforce today than before the pandemic, the overall share of the population participating in the labor force has dropped. If the labor force participation rate today was the same as it was in February of 2020, more than two million more Americans in our workforce to help fill those open jobs.

As the College continues realigning campus operations, BCCC is aggressively working to fill vacancies. The College is in the process of revamping the hiring and onboarding process under the leadership of a new Assistant Vice President of Human Resources. The number of positions filled in Human Resources is near 100%. New technology (e.g. application platform, onboarding module) is being implemented to modernize hiring practices.

Additionally, the College is responding to the legislative mandate to implement twelve (12) realignment tasks. Each Cabinet member continues to review positions in their respective areas to determine levels of need and efficiency. Much of the review stems from the June 2018 edBridge personnel study, which provided documentation about BCCC's organizational reporting structure and corresponding position control. In this regard, an annual report is submitted to the State, which details changes in full-time positions. The breadth of change at BCCC, now operating with a "students first" model and culture, has proven to be more challenging for some personnel.

Mayor's Scholars Program

Context:
While MSP has resulted in additional enrollment, retention of these students has been difficult, as shown in Exhibit 10. The second-year retention rates for MSP students averaged 44% for the first three cohorts. It declined to 14% for the fall 2021 cohort. The fall 2022 cohort had a 71% retention rate.

Comment:
The President should comment on strategies BCCC has used to increase the retention rate for MSP students.

Response:
The number one barrier for BCCC students to achieve success is financial support. Since 2018, the College has disbursed over $7.4 million in financial aid to MSP students. This aid includes Baltimore City funding, Federal and State grants, College work-study, and other aid. Since the College's MSP program is a "last dollar" program, completing the Federal Application for Student Financial Aid (FASFA) or Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) for undocumented students continues to be an entrance requirement for the program.

In 2021, BCCC's Board of Trustees approved the College-level Readiness Assessment and Course Placement Policy which determined the course level at which students will start on their path to success at the College in mathematics and reading/English and other transferable courses. Prior to the College-level Readiness Assessment and Course Placement Policy, most entering students were assessed for placement using a standardized placement test.

To better meet the needs of MSP students, BCCC monitors persistence rates for each MSP cohort and evaluates the effectiveness of the wrap-around support services provided throughout the three-year period of enrollment. Support services include expanded and embedded tutoring services, free textbooks, and free breakfast and lunches throughout Summer Bridge. MSP staff incorporate student check-ins to engage with students throughout the term to determine if interventions are needed to ensure the students' persistence in the program. Some students enter the Summer Bridge having earned college credits as dual-enrolled students. Former dual enrollment students continue to be critical recruitment targets for the MSP program.

The College filled all vacant Mayor's Scholars Program positions and actively engaged with campus partners to continue promoting the Program. The College employed additional summer and student staffing to increase recruitment efforts and support Summer Bridge/Program participants.

As the State's community college, MSP expanded its recruitment territory beyond Baltimore City to include Baltimore County Public High Schools and neighboring counties such as Carroll County and Anne Arundel County. MSP plans to further expand outreach to other neighboring counties such as Harford County, given that the program is available to all Maryland Residents. Baltimore City middle schools to engage with prospective students prior to high school to develop a pathway to college. This effort helps to ensure students are college-ready.

Mayor's Scholars Program

Context:
Baltimore City has been funding the MSP program since fiscal 2018. In fiscal 2024, Baltimore City decided to phase out funding for the program due to it overlapping with a similar program at Coppin State University. In fiscal 2025, BCCC received no funding for the MSP program from the city. While MSP funding has ended, Baltimore City continues to allocate $1.0 million to BCCC.

Comment:
The President should detail the future of the scholarship program and if there are plans to rebrand it in the near future.

Response:
Baltimore City has funded three cohorts (250 students per cohort) over three years. The College has supported the balance of funding for participants over 250 through the Board of Estimates Fund, Federal and State grants, and institutional funding. Aspects of the Program continues to receive support from the City through the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (i.e. Youth Works, Summer Meals Program).

Like most tuition-free college programs, the College is working to secure funding through philanthropic sources, including the Baltimore City Community College Foundation, corporate, and individual contributions.

The College is looking to expand the name to a "City Scholars" designation to include the City and other industry partners throughout Maryland.