

**AEL Presentation to the Board of Education, Edie Picken**

**Anne Arundel County Council Meeting, May 10, 2021**

Good evening. My name is Edie Picken and I am currently President of AEL which represents all Unit II employees.

1. With respect to the Superintendent's proposed budget, AEL can and will support a budget that provides for increased spending that enhances the education of our students. Just as important, it must embrace and recognize the value of employees.
2. As we know, the most significant cost in the educational budget is employee compensation. It is the allocation of the request and the equitable distribution of those funds that are of equal, if not most important.
3. With the passing of, or accepting of any budget request, it is critical to view the compensation portion in context. I am referencing the relationship of the compensation between the various groups of employees. The important question here is: Does the compensation being offered take into consideration the demands of the job, the supervision that is required? Is there a proper and fair differential between those that are supervised and those that are providing the supervision? I am referring to school-based personnel and the different responsibilities of those in the schoolhouse.
4. With respect to Unit II compensation, we are currently engaged in the negotiations process, and as usual compensation continues to be a formative topic. As a result, AEL is unable to specifically address salary increases with you this evening—those discussions will continue at the negotiating table. I must add, I use the term negotiations loosely here.
5. What is important to note, the allocation of pay between the different employee Units contemplates and produces a pay differential. Over the last several years--the last three more specifically--a continued erosion in that differential for Unit II employees has occurred as it relates to Units V & VI. This issue needs to be assessed and addressed.
6. Unit II consists of 342 employees, predominantly school-based administrators with a few positions at the Board. Between the 2018-2019 year and our current 2020-2021, overall Unit II has received approximately a 6% salary increase. On the other hand, Unit V, consisting of 440 employees, overall has received approximately between 10% and 14% increases in salary with 49 of those employees receiving a 20% or greater increase in salary resulting in some instances of job title reclassification and/or creation of new positions. This equates to those individuals potentially receiving anywhere between \$7,000 and \$10,000 or greater pay increases. Unit VI, consisting of 55 employees, overall, in this same time period has received anywhere between

15%-18%, with approximately 6 members receiving between 18%-20% increases in salary resulting in similar or greater pay increases.

7. I urge you to look closely at this budget item category and to compare it to the percentage of actual pay increase paid to all other represented employees.
8. The fact that a smaller number of employees—we are talking about Unit VI, the superintendents Board- based, upper echelon—as noted receive the largest aggregate amount. The smallest portion of the employee compensation package being provided does not tell the whole story. Clearly, the amount offered to each individual in Unit VI in real dollars far exceeds any amount offered in real dollars to any Unit II employee. It continues to erode the differential and continues to unfairly compensate one group of already highly paid personnel at the expense of another.
9. The amounts mentioned above were submitted as proof of these excesses in salary advances for Unit VI and Unit V as compared to Unit II to the Board's Internal Auditor at his request. It is clear this path of excessive compensation at the expense of Unit II and other employee groups is continuing.
10. The Board's current proposal shared with AEL as it relates to funding is appreciated; but paying those for what was agreed to and underfunded in the past is not a pay raise, particularly regarding the ongoing increases in workload. Where is the compensation for that?
11. A budget that includes compensation placeholders that are prepared and submitted for approval before negotiations are concluded is not a negotiated budget. It is not a product of any negotiating process that requires, by law, good faith bargaining. Waiting on the Superintendent's proposed budget with its place holding line item is an unacceptable mechanism to subvert the bargaining process. Bargaining typically does not begin, let alone resolve itself, in any tentative agreement until the Board of Education comes to the table to discuss the matter after the Superintendent's budget has been submitted.
12. The result of the process? The Superintendent's place holding item is the Board of Education's first and best offer. No true, good faith bargaining occurs. It pretends to be that, but it only shows as a calendar event to say negotiating occurred, when no negotiating occurred at all. At the table we are "told" what to accept and treated with disrespect and a condescending manner as though we should be grateful for what we were offered.

13. In the review of salary differentials, it will be important to identify growth, changes in position titles, and the creation of new positions allowing for increases in salary for Units V and VI. Units I and Unit II are not able to have title reclassifications, so there is no resulting potential for increased compensation.
  
14. Aside from compensation, Unit VI employees receive in large part the same benefits that Unit II receives under the Negotiated Agreement.
  
15. So, in closing, a fully funded budget is essential for the maintenance of a first-class school system. A budget which recognizes the hard work and dedication of its employees is a justified reward for the sacrifices which are made daily. Increased compensation is welcomed and deserved. Compensation should be reexamined and those that are involved in the daily and direct delivery of education and support of and to students at the school level should be given a higher and well-deserved priority.