



# UPPER ARLINGTON SCHOOLS

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Dear Upper Arlington community members,

Upper Arlington's schools are at the heart of our community, and, as your Board of Education, we truly value residents' commitment to our schools and the children of Upper Arlington.

We are constantly reviewing our district's financial situation and future financial needs. At the June 21 Board of Education meeting, we took the final step to place a 6.9-mill operating levy request on the November 8, 2022, ballot.

This is a decision that has been a long time in the making. In November 2019, we announced the need for a new operating levy in the fall of 2020. Amid the difficulties that residents faced in the subsequent two years due to the pandemic and the related economic situation, the levy request was delayed, and we mailed letters to our community with an update on these plans in June of 2020 and 2021.

Because that levy was needed at the time in 2020, we had to take proactive steps to stretch the district's resources in order to maintain operations and our high-quality academic program. We reduced the budget reserve; sought out approximately \$4.6 million in cost reductions, primarily through a three-year hiring freeze on new positions; and utilized COVID-related funding made available to school districts.

Even with these steps, our schools and our community are now at a pivotal moment. Like everyone in our country, we are facing historic inflation. Our schools are also facing the exciting challenge of growing enrollment — a projected 24.6% increase, or 1,500 students joining our district, by 2031-2032 — with little increase in state funding to cover those rising costs.

Although property values are rising all around us in Upper Arlington, the majority of our district revenues — 96% — remain relatively fixed, with little or no room for growth. That's because of a state law known as House Bill 920, which ensures that the district's funding from voted operating levies remains flat even as property values increase. That is why suburban school districts like ours return to voters about every three years in order to keep up with inflation and the rising costs of doing business.

This all leads us to where we are today. The 6.9-mill request this fall would provide needed operating funding to continue offering high-quality academic programs for students while also taking steps to rebuild the budget reserve that had been reduced from 25%, or three months' worth of annual expenditures, amid the financial constraints of the pandemic. The budget reserve, currently at 13% of annual expenditures, would gradually increase to 17%, or two months' worth of annual expenditures, by fiscal year 2026. By taking a measured, gradual approach to rebuilding our "rainy day" fund, we are upholding our commitment to our community to be fiscally responsible while also respecting the financial challenges our residents may be facing with rising household costs.

In the absence of new operating funding, however, there would have to be significant cuts — \$10 million in 2023 alone — which could only be accomplished through measures that would have a considerable impact on student experience.

The 6.9-mill operating levy would add approximately \$241.50 a year in property taxes per \$100,000 of home valuation as determined by the Franklin County auditor. For an Upper Arlington home valued around \$400,000, that would amount to an additional \$966 per year based on calendar year 2022 tax valuations.



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All of the steps we have outlined will protect our schools and our students in case of financial challenges in the future, while also ensuring that we can responsibly plan for our growing enrollment and provide the highest standard of academic excellence that our students deserve and our community expects. We will continue to seek out cost savings and efficiencies throughout our district to ensure that families and residents are receiving the best value for their investment in our schools.

We invite all Upper Arlington residents to learn about our financial situation and the operating levy issue on our website, [www.uaschools.org](http://www.uaschools.org), so that you can cast the vote you feel makes the most sense for your family and our community. If you have any questions, please reach out to us at [boe@uaschools.org](mailto:boe@uaschools.org).

Sincerely,

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