

Sirad A. Hassan

December 03, 2025

**Office of the County Executive**

12 East Church Street  
Frederick, MD 21701

Dear County Executive Fitzwater,

I am writing to express my full interest in being appointed to the Frederick County Board of Education to fill the vacancy created by Member Nancy Allen's resignation. I am a Frederick County resident of 14 years, a graduate of Urbana High School (Class of 2016, International Baccalaureate program), a registered voter, and someone whose academic training, professional work, and personal commitments have been shaped by a deep dedication to educational equity, student wellness, and inclusive family engagement. With three younger siblings currently enrolled in FCPS, with a fourth entering next year, I have a direct, ongoing stake in the strength, transparency, and long-term well-being of our schools.

My lived experience in this school system has guided my professional journey in powerful ways. As a teenager in FCPS, I witnessed the strengths of our diverse classrooms and the resilience of our students, but also the gaps in mental health support, cultural responsiveness, and communication between families and schools. These experiences motivated me to co-found End Racism FCPS, a student-alumni coalition that organized countywide dialogues, policy recommendations, and multiple town halls including the widely attended *End Racism FCPS Town Hall on Mental Health* in partnership with local educators and community advocates. This work strengthened my belief that young people, families, and community members must be at the center of decision-making in our school system. The town halls we organized became a platform for students to speak openly about their experiences with bias, discrimination, mental health struggles, and school climate—issues that remain critically important for FCPS today.

After graduating from Urbana, I went on to earn my bachelor's degree from Princeton University and my master's from Columbia University. I am now completing my PhD at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, where I specialize in adolescent health, structural inequities, and K-12 education-related disparities experienced by marginalized families. My current research includes mixed-methods projects on autism care navigation, immigrant family engagement, and early childhood developmental supports—expertise that is immediately relevant to FCPS as the district works to improve special education services, broaden mental health support, and strengthen

culturally responsive practices. I also serve as a teaching assistant in adolescent health and youth mental health courses, further grounding me in evidence-based educational and developmental frameworks.

Beyond my academic work, I remain deeply embedded in community-level advocacy for families and children. I work with SPACE (Somali Parents Advocacy Center for Education), a Boston-based organization supporting refugee and immigrant caregivers of autistic and disabled children. In this role, I help develop culturally accessible parent workshops, support families navigating IEP processes, collaborate with school districts on inclusive practices, and lead projects focused on early developmental screening and stigma reduction. This work has strengthened my skills in special education advocacy, trauma-informed communication, and cross-cultural engagement—competencies that I believe would greatly benefit FCPS families, especially those who historically have not felt fully seen or heard in school settings.

My passion for special education is also personal: several members of my extended family and community have navigated disabilities, developmental delays, and mental health challenges in FCPS schools. As the eldest sister of four younger siblings—including one with learning-related needs related to his Autism diagnosis—I have a close and current understanding of the unique barriers families face in accessing services, coordinating with teachers, and advocating for their children. These lived experiences motivate me to be a strong, empathetic, and informed advocate for all students—particularly those who rely on special education, English language support, or mental health services.

My strengths and commitments closely align with the expectations set forth in *Board Policy 101*, which emphasizes that public education thrives when communities are engaged as partners. My work with End Racism FCPS demonstrated my ability to build trust, collaborate across lines of identity and ideology, convene diverse stakeholders, and create spaces where difficult but necessary conversations can occur. As a researcher, I am trained to evaluate evidence, weigh competing needs, and communicate clearly. As a community advocate, I have learned how to listen with humility, respond thoughtfully, and co-create solutions rather than impose them.

I believe strongly in non-partism, student-centered governance. Throughout my work, locally and nationally, I have engaged respectfully with people who hold vastly different viewpoints from my own. I see disagreement not as a barrier, but as an opportunity to build better policy. If appointed, I would work diligently to strengthen trust between the Board and the community, increase transparency, and ensure that every family—whether long-term residents or newly arrived immigrants—feels connected to their child’s education. If selected, I would be eager to contribute actively to several of the Board’s advisory committees, and I would welcome assignments wherever the Board believes I can be most useful. My strongest areas of alignment include:

- **Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC):** My research in autism and developmental disabilities, my work supporting caregivers through SPACE, and my firsthand experience supporting family members with learning differences align deeply with SECAC's mission to advise the district on the needs of students with disabilities.
- **Racial Equity Committee:** My leadership in End Racism FCPS and my scholarship in structural racism, adolescent development, and educational equity make me well-prepared to help identify inequities, strengthen inclusive practices, and support ongoing implementation of FCPS's Equity Policy.
- **Curriculum and Instruction Committee:** Given my teaching experience and research in adolescent health, culturally responsive education, and student well-being, I would welcome opportunities to review curriculum materials, consider legislation affecting schools, and support instructional innovation.
- **Citizens Advisory Council (CAC):** My experience coordinating large-scale community listening sessions and engaging families—especially those underrepresented in civic processes—aligns naturally with the CAC's charge to bring public concerns directly to the Board.
- **Family Life Advisory Committee (FLAC):** With my background in health education, reproductive health equity, and culturally sensitive family engagement, I can contribute meaningfully to review and selection processes for sensitive instructional materials.

I am also open to serving on any other committee where the Board believes my training could contribute to student outcomes or district improvement.

I would like to note that, although my doctoral work is based in Massachusetts, I still live in Frederick County, which is my current home and where my family, my community, and my long-term aspirations are. My vision is to build a career that integrates public health, education, and community development here in Frederick. I see this appointment not only as a chance to serve the county that raised me, but also as a meaningful step toward a long-term commitment to strengthening FCPS through evidence-based policy, community partnership, and compassion for the full diversity of our students.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you, discuss my qualifications further, and answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your dedication to keeping our schools strong. It would be an honor to serve the students, families, and educators of Frederick County through this appointment.

Sincerely,  
**Sirad Abdisalam Hassan**  
Frederick County Resident  
Urbana High School, Class of 2016