Only 5 candidates have filed to run for Harford school board

By Shaela Foster

Only two candidates for the Harford County Board of Education filed a campaign finance report last week, as the race to fill all seats on the board looks like it will be shaping up late.

The school board consists of six elected members and three members appointed by the county executive to four-year terms. So far, a total of five candidates have filed across the county's six districts. None of the current board members have filed to run for reelection.

As residents prepare to elect their next school system representatives in November, candidates were required to submit their first campaign finance report with the Maryland State Board of Elections on Jan. 21, outlining how much money they have received over the past year, where it came from and what they spent it on. The reports cover the period of Jan. 9, 2025, to Jan. 14, 2026.

But only District C candidates Cathy Kowalewski and Liliana Norkaitis filed to run for office early enough to meet that deadline. District C candidate Shawn Ryan, District D candidate Rachelle Johnson and District E candidate Aaron Boyle filed for candidacy within the past three weeks and did not have to submit a report.

Norkaitis raised $9,325.33, according to her finance report. She spent $2,426.23 and has $6,689.10 left to spend.

On Tuesday, County Executive Bob Cassilly named Norkaitis as his nominee to fill the seat of former BOE president Aaron Poynton, who resigned last month.

Kowalewski filed a report, but contributions and expenditures are listed at $0.

Current board members Denise Perry (District A), Wade Sewell (District B), Melissa Hahn (District D), Carol Bruce (District E) and Diane Alvarez (District F) were all elected to their first terms on the board in 2022. District C's Carol Mueller was the only returning board member. She was appointed to her position in 2020 following the sudden death of Kathryn "Kathy" Carmello.

According to state law, elected board members may not serve more than two consecutive terms, making Mueller ineligible for reelection.

The other incumbents, and any other candidates who wish to run for the school board, will have until Feb. 24 to file for candidacy. If no candidate files to run in a particular district, the Harford County Council can appoint a member to the vacant seat.

The Harford school board has come under increased public scrutiny recently following reports analyzing the system's teacher hiring process and an investigation into the actions of Superintendent Sean Bulson during an education conference in New Orleans in 2024.

Bulson is Harford Schools' top-paid employee, earning an annual salary of $293,219.57 and his 30-day paid administrative leave ends Feb. 7. His four-year contract with Harford Schools ends June 30.