Barberton City Schools: Important Update Regarding the November Ballot

Dear Magic City Community,

At the July 15th Board of Education meeting, the Board officially voted to approve a resolution placing a 1% Earned Income Tax Levy for a period of 5 years on the upcoming November General Election ballot.

As a district, we are committed to transparency. We want to ensure every resident has clear, factual information about why this funding is necessary, how this proposal directly responds to community feedback from the spring, and what it means for your household.

We listened to what voters said in May. More details are listed below, but there are main points to highlight:

- **This tax will not affect seniors on a fixed income.** Supporting the levy will improve the school district and community, but not impact seniors financially.
- The earned income tax would apply to active wages, salaries, and self-employment earnings of Barberton residents. **Retirees, Social Security recipients, pensions, interest, dividends, and unemployment benefits are completely exempt.**
- **This levy is for a period of 5 years - not continuous.** This holds the district accountable to voters.

Why is this levy needed?
Before asking the community for additional support, our administration and Board took aggressive action to address this shortfall locally. Over the past few months, we have implemented deep, structural reductions in district operations and staffing totaling approximately $7 million—we have cut as far as we reasonably can without completely dismantling core educational programs and student safety.

Even with these massive reductions, additional local revenue is required by the state to balance our budget and move toward lifting the district out of fiscal oversight.

We Listened to Our Voters: How This Proposal Differs from May
In May, the district proposed an 11-mill property tax levy that was heavily defeated. We heard our community loud and clear: property values are already high, a continuous tax is a permanent burden, and the total ask was simply too large.

In direct response to that message, the Board has completely changed course for the November ballot:

- It is **significantly smaller**: While a 1% earned income tax is still a meaningful ask, it represents a substantially lower financial demand on our community than the 11-mill property tax proposed in May.

- It is **NOT permanent**: The May property tax levy would have been continuous. The approved earned income tax is strictly limited to a period of 5 years, giving the district time to stabilize while remaining accountable to voters.
- It **shifts the tax structure** entirely: Instead of placing the entire burden on property owners, an *earned* income tax broadens the base and focuses strictly on active earnings of Barberton residents. **Seniors on a fixed income are not impacted by this tax.**

Understanding the Differences: How it Affects You
To clarify exactly who is impacted by this new direction compared to traditional models:

Tax Type	What is Taxed?	Who is Exempt?
Current November 2026 Ballot Issue: Approved Earned Income Tax (1%)	**Only active wages, salaries, and self-employment earnings of Barberton residents for 5 years.**	**Retirees, Social Security recipients, pensions, interest, dividends, and unemployment benefits are completely exempt.**
Traditional Income Tax	All income sources, including retirement.	Can heavily burden seniors on fixed incomes.
Previous May 2026 Ballot Issue: Traditional Property Tax (11 Mills)	Assessed real estate value; permanent/continuous.	No one automatically; impacts homeowners and renters alike, regardless of job status.

The Takeaway for Barberton
The Board moved forward with the 5-year earned income tax model because it represents the fairest path forward. It explicitly protects our senior citizens on fixed incomes, ensures that only those with active salaries contribute, and guarantees that 100% of the funds stay in Barberton to protect our schools and students.

We will continue to share open, factual data as November approaches so that every voter can make an informed decision.

Please also refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Document that will be shared and posted on the BCSD District website.

Thank you for your continued partnership and Magic Pride!

Sincerely,

Jason Ondrus
Superintendent of Schools

Thomas Harnden
School Board President