To: Board of Trustees
Howard Community College

From: Howard Community College Faculty Forum Constituency Committee

Date: November 7, 2025

RE: No Confidence in Howard Community College President

The Faculty Forum of Howard Community College (FFCC) formally expresses a vote of **no confidence** in the institutional leadership of Daria J. Willis, PhD, President of Howard Community College. The FFCC reached this decision in a vote held on November 7, 2025. The FFCC expresses this opinion in response to a July 31, 2025, statement by the HCC Board of Trustees that they maintain “full confidence in President Willis and her leadership” (https://howardcommunitycollege.substack.com/p/statement-from-the-hcc-board-of-trustees).

The FFCC represents all full-time faculty members of the College. On the day of this vote, the FFCC acted in conjunction with part-time adjunct faculty members, who are not eligible to vote on FFCC matters. However, on this day, the FFCC polled the adjunct faculty members who attended the meeting. Those adjunct faculty members concurred with the no-confidence vote, with 100% of adjunct faculty members who voted expressing no confidence in Dr. Willis’ leadership.

Members of FFCC have identified the following areas that warrant no confidence.

1. **Leadership Instability and Hostile Work Environment**

   a. Since Dr. Willis’ arrival at HCC, the College has suffered from extraordinary turnover at every level of administration. Multiple senior officers of the College, including some of Dr. Willis’ own appointees, have been dismissed summarily, and even escorted off campus by campus security officers. Far too many Vice Presidents, Associate Vice Presidents, Deans and Associate Deans are serving in an “acting” or “interim” capacity. (One faculty member surveyed notes that HCC has had “five VPAAs in four years.”)

   b. Dr. Willis’ choices to oversee human resources and financial operations have been especially troubling. Before Dr. Willis’ arrival, HR functioned acceptably, and employees were paid correctly and on time. The appointments of both Omarion Jalloh and Joe Whalen to lead Human Resources resulted in worse performance. In

May 2025, an Associate Vice President for Finance, Arnold Bascombe, resigned before the end of his first day of work.

c. Employees report retaliation against dissent and a pervasive sense of uncertainty regarding their roles and security.

d. The College's ability to retain experienced faculty members, staff members and administrators has been compromised. More than 80 experienced full-time faculty and staff members have left the College during Dr. Willis' tenure. For comparison, the ranks of full-time faculty currently number approximately 180.

2. Disrespect Toward Faculty and Shared Governance

The will and wishes of the faculty have been repeatedly undermined.

a. A particularly troubling example involves the President's overruling of near-unanimous faculty votes to grant emeritus status to long-serving professors. Valerie Lash, a theatre professor at HCC for over 40 years, and Dr. Debora Kent, a professor of music for 30 years are notable examples. Dr. Willis' actions here are widely viewed as punitive and disrespectful to both the individual professors and the academic community.

b. Other faculty members surveyed note that Dr. Willis has repeatedly formed faculty committees, only to ignore those committees' recommendations later.

c. Dr. Willis has stated publicly and on the record that the best advice she could give herself in her current job is to "trust no one," and that faculty are "a dime a dozen." At an official meeting with faculty and staff, she told faculty that if they did not like her decisions, "there are plenty of exit signs around."

d. Implementation of seven-week classes happened over faculty objection. The implementation of seven-week terms resulted in the loss of exam week–a loss felt by both students and faculty. Implementation has not been smooth; so far, the College's only response to these troubles appears to be shortening class meetings by 5 minutes.

e. Campus security officers removed pro-union signs (but no other kinds of signs) from faculty members' office doors, and entered faculty members' offices while they were absent to remove pro-union signs. Campus security officers also circulated through academic buildings taking cell-phone photos of every office door that displayed a union sign. In a statement dated July 30, 2025, and signed by Dr. Willis, HCC conceded that it may have engaged in unfair labor practices by removing the pro-union signs, and that "HCC threatened, but did not take, disciplinary action against Union members following the members' refusal to remove their posted Union signage." (See Notice to Employees of Howard Community College, attached.)

3. **Mismanagement and Operational Failures**

a. Administrative disarray has become commonplace. Human Resources, IT, Accounts Payable, and other essential areas are plagued by errors, delays, and vacancies. Full-time employees with institutional memory have been dismissed from their jobs and replaced with costly outside consultants.

b. Before Dr. Willis' tenure, part-time adjunct faculty members received written documentation of their teaching assignments, non-teaching duties and compensation on the first day of the semester; now they receive no written notice at all. Moreover, they must often wait until weeks into the semester for any stipend information to turn up in their employee portals, and to receive their first pay.

c. Students report difficulty meeting with academic advisors. In November 2025, HCC's ratio of students to academic advisors is approximately 1700:1. In October 2024, when then-Provost Dr. Shantay Grays spoke with FFCC, she reported that the ratio of students to advisors was approximately 980:1. NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising recommends a ratio in the range of 300:1 or 400:1 (https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advisor-Load.aspx).

d. Although Dr. Willis celebrated the renovation of the campus bookstore, the changes implemented have not resulted in better results for students. One surveyed faculty member writes, "Faculty were told that students would be 'first-day ready' with the new Slingshot system. Every semester since Slingshot started, I have had online students unable to get their books in the Campus Store. This problem has persisted into Week 6 of the regular-term sessions."

4. **Financial Misconduct and Questionable Priorities**

Concerns have been raised about resource allocation.

a. While details about payment are not transparent, it appears that HCC has funded costly administrative travel and perks for senior leaders (e.g., the recent trip to Japan that was the entire substance of Dr. Willis' remarks to faculty at Fall 2025 Convocation). At the same time, hiring freezes cause full-time teaching positions to go unfilled, and payroll issues persist for employees who do not receive timely and correct pay. These choices suggest a disregard for fiscal responsibility and institutional priorities.

b. For three months, the College deducted funds from employees' paychecks for 403(b) contributions (retirement account contributions), but those funds were not deposited to retirement accounts until months later. The College has not offered a satisfactory explanation for this mismanagement of funds.

c. At a meeting with Howard County Council members on May 5, 2025, then-Executive VP for Finance and Administration Dr. Ty Stone was unable to say what portion of the College's payroll went to senior administration, what portion to teaching faculty, and what portion to employees who provide support services.

d. Refer again to Item 1b for a discussion of questionable leadership in personnel and financial matters.

5. **Lack of Transparency and Accountability**

a. Decision-making has become increasingly opaque. Communication from the President's Office lacks clarity, and meaningful opportunities for faculty and staff input have been diminished or ignored.

b. High-level administrators have been awarded jobs by non-competitive processes. Dr. Willis' administration has announced that administrative positions at the decanal level would be filled by internal candidates, and then opened them to external candidates without any internal candidates having been interviewed.

In 2019, The United States Department of Commerce honored Howard Community College with the Malcolm Baldridge National Quality Award in the field of education, for the College's "performance excellence" (https://www.howardcc.edu/about-us/baldrige/). For years, faculty members have tried to work with the administration on issues of College governance, including but not limited to the organization of the College into academic divisions, the structure of the academic calendar, and searches for Deans, Vice Presidents and other administrators. Dr. Willis has repeatedly rebuffed the faculty.

In 2025, the Faculty Forum Constituency Committee sadly expresses no confidence that Dr. Willis' leadership of Howard Community College positions the College to match its recently attained levels of performance excellence, or to fulfill its mission of "providing pathways for success" to residents of Howard County (https://www.howardcc.edu/about-us/mission-and-strategic-plan/).

NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES
OF HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

STATE LAW, SPECIFICALLY THE MARYLAND PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RELATIONS ACT, MD. CODE ANN., STATE GOV'T § 22-101 – 601, GIVES YOU THE RIGHT TO:

- Form, join or assist a union;
- Choose representatives to bargain with the College on your behalf;
- Act together with other employees for your aid, benefit, or protection; and
- Choose not to engage in any of these protected activities.

THE COLLEGE WILL NOT retaliate against any employee for acting with other employees, or on behalf of other employees, for their mutual aid, benefit, or protection.

THE COLLEGE WILL NOT interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of their rights under law.

THE COLLEGE WILL NOT forbid, restrain, or otherwise retaliate against employees for freely discussing and negotiating the College's policies concerning terms and conditions of employment or other mutual aid or protection with other employees.

THE COLLEGE WILL NOT discipline or counsel any employee or union member who openly raises complaints of misconduct or performance against a supervisor or member of management during a protected activity, so long as the complaints are not made intentionally to injure another by circulating defamatory or insulting material known to be false.

THE COLLEGE WILL NOT otherwise, or in any way, restrict or limit any of the rights bestowed upon employees by the Maryland Public Employee Relations Act.

Pursuant to a settlement agreement, HCC acknowledges that it may have violated PERA §§ 22-206(a)(1) and (4) when it enforced various procedures by removing pro-Union signage posted by Union members within a building on HCC's campus, and that HCC threatened, but did not take, disciplinary action against Union members following the members' refusal to remove their posted Union signage. HCC states that it did not intend to commit unfair labor practices.

The purpose of this law is to encourage and protect the exercise by you of the full freedom of association, self-organization and designation of representative of your own choosing. State Gov't § 22-102(a).

BY HOWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE:

Dated: 07/30/2025 By: D. J. Willis
Daria J. Willis, Ph.D., President

This is an official notice and must not be defaced by anyone. This Notice will remain posted for 90 consecutive days from the date of posting and must not be altered, defaced, or covered by any other material. If you believe your rights under the Public Employee Relations Act have been violated, you should contact the Public Employee Relations Board: laborboard.maryland.gov