

SMOB Election Voter Guide

Created by the Howard County Association of Student Councils (HCASC)



This packet was created by the Legislative Affairs Committee (LAC) of HCASC to help the student voters of HCPSS make an informed decision. HCASC does not endorse any candidate. HCASC serves to support and empower all students of HCPSS.

Meet Your Candidates

Lamia Ayaz



School: Howard High School

Grade: 11th

Email: lamia4smob@gmail.com

[Lamia's Canvas Page - Click to Learn More about Them](#)

Antonio Clay-Hardy



School: Wilde Lake High School

Grade: 10th

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[Antonio's Canvas Page - Click to Learn More about Them](#)

Candidate Questionnaire

The following questionnaire contains questions that we asked to both candidates via email. We have not in any way altered their responses, so the responses you see are their exact responses. Each candidate was limited to a maximum of 150 words for each question.

1. What do you think is the *most* important issue HCPSS is facing currently?

<p>The most important issue that HCPSS is facing is a deterioration in student mental health. There is so much pressure on students to perform well. Many are juggling academics, sports, extracurricular activities, and jobs, all while trying to maintain a personal and social life. Compound this with worries about standardized test scores and college admissions, it's no surprise that one Howard County survey found that 1 in 4 high school students met the criteria for depression. There is a lack of resources and support for struggling students, leaving many to feel unheard and isolated.</p> <p>- Lamia Ayaz</p>	<p>There are so many vital issues facing HCPSS but when I think about the most important issue facing our schools is the lack of mental health professionals in our schools. Most of the issues that we deal with on a day-to-day basis stem from how we deal with and respond to our mental health problems. If we want to improve how students feel when they walk into school, then it starts with having more professionals in school dedicated to the improvement of student lives.</p> <p>- Antonio Clay-Hardy</p>
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2. For the issue you outlined in Question 1, what steps do you plan on taking to combat it if you are elected?

<p>The first step I propose to combat this deterioration is to survey students about their major stressors and what changes they'd like to see in the school system. Do students have trouble accessing their counselor? Do they see bullying in their school remain unaddressed? Do they feel like they are being taught to memorize rather than taught to learn? This feedback can be shared with Board of Education members and Central Office staff to make concrete change occur. I promise to advocate for action to address these issues, not just provide insincere platitudes.</p> <p>- Lamia Ayaz</p>	<p>To combat the ongoing issue of the lack of mental health professionals in school, I will dedicate myself to always making sure we are continuing to have an ongoing conversation about how mental health is affecting students in our community. The solution to every problem starts with talking about the problem and talking about the facts. And the facts are, that too many students are taking their own lives and they are doing so because they don't have anyone to turn to and talk about what they're going through. We need to also educate parents on how to not only deal with but understand the battles their children are going through.</p> <p>- Antonio Clay-Hardy</p>
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3. How will you ensure that the students of HCPSS are represented in your decisions?

<p>To ensure that students of HCPSS are represented in my decisions, I will engage with students from all</p>	<p>Having student input on all issues is incredibly important to me and to the SMOB position in general. We</p>
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<p>backgrounds. This entails doing school and community visits, welcoming conversations with students and their families who might not have historically felt they had a voice in the county decision-making process. This could be families where English is not the primary language at home, or students who have tried to express their concerns but struggled to find people willing to hear them. All perspectives are important in making an informed vote; at the end of the day, the SMOB is a representative of the students and <i>their</i> beliefs.</p> <p>- Lamia Ayaz</p>	<p>need to make it more accessible for students to not only understand the issues at hand but be able to advocate for their own personal stances on those issues. I will use Google Forms and surveys sent out to schools based on current legislation in front of the Board of Ed. But also I want to visit every high school and middle school not just once, but multiple times to be able to have those personal and very crucial and informative conversations with students.</p> <p>- Antonio Clay-Hardy</p>
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4. What experiences or lessons have you learned/had in your time attending HCPSS schools that led you to run for SMOB this year? In other words, why are you running?

<p>Earlier this year, I was given the opportunity to testify at the Maryland General Assembly in support of a bill banning the sale of diet pills to minors. At first, I didn't expect much from a 2-minute testimony. However, I found that the politicians in the room really listened when students came up to</p>	<p>Being a part of Howard County schools has taught me that we truly do have issues that need solving, from rampant drug use to the inequitable distribution and access to items and resources they need. As a member of Wilde Lake's Speech and Debate Team and having to compete against other schools in the</p>
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<p>speak. We were able to discuss an issue that was personally important to me and had impacted so many of my friends and family members. That was the first time I realized that the things I had to say could actually impact decision-making, and I want to bring that back to the Board of Education. If there is any issue that students are facing and I have the opportunity to right it, I will do so without a moment of hesitation.</p> <p>- Lamia Ayaz</p>	<p>county with budgets triple ours, showed me that we can't expect every school to perform up to their potential if we don't give them the resources or the opportunity to do so. As SMOB, I want to make sure that we give students the best shot at succeeding and closing the opportunity gap that is so large across so many of our schools.</p> <p>- Antonio Clay-Hardy</p>
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5. In your opinion, what role should the Student Member of the Board serve in HCPSS? In other words, why is the SMOB an important position in our school system?

<p>The Student Member of the Board should be a familiar face in HCPSS and a person who students feel comfortable reaching out to. At the end of the day, it is students who are impacted by the decisions being made at the Board of Education; it only makes sense that they have someone who can represent their concerns and their beliefs in a room full of adults. The position is especially unique in that the HCPSS SMOB has voting rights, unlike</p>	<p>The SMOB ought to play an extremely crucial role on the Board of Education. Not many people realize this but students are actually the largest stakeholder in our school system, meaning we represent the largest group of anybody that is a member of HCPSS. And so with that, we need to make sure that we have a person on the Board who will advocate for ALL, not just some, of the students that make up one of the best school systems in the</p>
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<p>many other counties. The student's vote on an issue counts just as much as any other member's, and that speaks volumes to the power that students hold.</p> <p>- Lamia Ayaz</p>	<p>Country.</p> <p>- Antonio Clay-Hardy</p>
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