



# Media Alert

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **HCPS Educator Named Maryland’s 2026 NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence Recipient**

Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) is proud to announce that Erica Richardson, HCPS 2024 Teacher of the Year and dedicated educator at Joppatowne High School, has been selected as the Maryland recipient of the 2026 National Education Association (NEA) Foundation Travelers Award for Teaching Excellence.

Richardson is one of only 48 public school educators nationwide to receive this prestigious honor. At Joppatowne High, she teaches Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (HSEP) Criminal Justice, World History, and College Sociology, serves as Social Studies Chairperson, and leads as Homeland Security Program Coordinator. Beyond the classroom, she is the Senior Class Advisor and coaches football, girls’ basketball, and track & field.

“Erica exemplifies the passion, dedication, and leadership that define outstanding educators,” said Dr. Sean Bulson, Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools. “As our 2024 Teacher of the Year, she has already demonstrated the profound impact a teacher can have on students, colleagues, and the school community. This latest recognition as Maryland’s recipient of the NEA Foundation Travelers Award for Teaching Excellence reflects her continued commitment to preparing students for success and inspiring excellence both inside and beyond the classroom.”

The Travelers Award for Teaching Excellence, presented annually by the NEA Foundation, recognizes educators for excellence in classroom practice, leadership in the teaching profession, community engagement, and a commitment to equity and opportunity for all students.

Richardson will be honored alongside fellow recipients at the 2026 Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington, D.C., on February 13, 2026. At the gala, five educators from across the nation will be selected to receive the Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence, each accompanied by a \$10,000 prize and documentary feature. One honoree will also receive the NEA Member Benefits Award, the Foundation’s highest honor, with a \$25,000 prize.

HCPS congratulates Erica Richardson on this incredible achievement and is proud to celebrate her continued service to her students, her school, and the Harford County community. For more information about the 2026 NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence, visit [www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org)

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