

After delays, FCPS superintendent says he will create database of salary information

BY VALARIE HONEYCUTT SPEARS
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Amid a budget crisis, a Fayette County Public Schools board member says Superintendent Demetrus Liggins must make public a list of district salaries with employee names attached, which is customary for many Kentucky public agencies.

When Monica Mundy made that request to Liggins Thursday night at a school board meeting, he said he was “totally open to that.” He asked Mundy to provide him with what she would like to see in addition to what’s already provided every month.

Mundy emailed Liggins Friday with an example of what she was asking for: “Name, salary, job title, and department of each employee in the district annually.”

Liggins replied by email less than 30 minutes later: “Thank you for the example. We will create a database to add to our transparency website.”

The transparency discussion comes as FCPS faces a \$16 million budget shortfall and intense public criticism over a previous attempt to raise the occupational license tax,

along with the revelation the district’s contingency fund is millions of dollars smaller than anticipated.

It’s not the first time Liggins has been asked to release more salary and position information.

Board member Amanda Ferguson on Friday provided the Herald-Leader with emails that show she has been making a request of Liggins for greater detail in salary and position information since 2023, noting the district provided more information in the past.

The emails show Liggins said he would provide more information and had apologized in 2024 for not delivering it. Ferguson said Friday that despite this, the information has never been given to her or made public.

“For most of my career, my own salary has been listed in a publicly available database alongside thousands of other employees,” Mundy told the Herald-Leader Friday.

Mundy is a University of Kentucky employee.

Under Kentucky law, salaries of public employees are a public record. Several major institutions in Kentucky — including state government, Jefferson County Public Schools and public uni-

versities — already publish annual databases that include employee names, job titles, departments and salaries, Mundy said.

“I understand this level of transparency can be uncomfortable for some, but it serves an important purpose. It promotes transparency in how the vast majority of our school district’s budget is spent, ensures accountability in the use of taxpayer dollars, and fosters openness with the community,” Mundy said.

Until a few years ago, the district regularly provided the position, the salary, the dates a position was created and the fund source, as shown in a 2021 document on the district website.

The June 2025 “position control document” on the district website had three columns. The first said, for example, “contract employee” with no employee name; the second described a position in generic terms, such as “administrative dean;” and the third provided a salary.

There was no date of when the position was created or the fund source, as Ferguson had been seeking.

“(Former board mem-

ber) Tom Jones and I both started requesting that the position control document be re-added to the agenda in its original format sometime in late 2023 or early 2024. It has never returned to the regular agenda in that format,” Ferguson told the Herald-Leader Friday.

On Sept. 22, 2023, Ferguson wrote to Liggins in an email, “Thank you for including the position control document on this month’s agenda. Is there a reason the format has changed? In the past, it included salaries and the creation date of each position, and I would like to see that information as well.”

Two days later, Liggins wrote to Ferguson, “Thank you for your prompt attention to the position control document on this month’s agenda. I appreciate your diligence in reviewing the information.

“Regarding the format change, the adjustment was made due to the fact that the previous format proved to be extremely laborious and time-intensive, often requiring the involvement of several departments over an extended period. In an effort to streamline the process and allocate resources more efficiently, we opted for a more streamlined presentation,” Liggins wrote.

“However, I want to assure you that I understand the importance of the additional details you mentioned, specifically the inclusion of salaries and creation dates for each position. Given your request, I will have my team allocate the necessary time and resources to provide this information in the format you find most beneficial. It will not be ready in time for Monday’s board meeting though.

“As soon as it is complete, I will send it to you via email.”

That information never arrived.

Ferguson wrote another email to Liggins May 3, 2024, asking again for more complete salary and position information.

“I am revisiting this email from last fall and requesting that a full position control document be included on the board agenda each month. By full, I mean one that shows not only new positions for the fiscal year but all positions including salaries, creation dates, and funding source,” Ferguson said.

She added: “Transparency and fiscal responsibility are important to me, and I think taxpayers should be able to see this information on a regular basis.”

On May 4, 2024, Liggins replied, “Thanks for following back up about this. I apologize for not completing this task as intended. I’m not entirely sure where things fell through, but I take full responsibility for not following up as I had planned and mentioned in my previous email.

“As I explained in that email, creating this report is quite labor-intensive and involves coordination with several other departments. Considering the current workload on our budget team this month, with the extensive work required for finalizing the tentative budget, and the increased demands on many other departments due to the closing of the school year, I’m hesitant to add this additional task to their plates,” Liggins wrote.

He added, “That being said, I completely agree with your sentiment regarding transparency. It’s worth noting that we’ve

made significant strides towards transparency during my tenure, including the introduction of initiatives like the Financial Transparency Dashboard and the Salary Calculator. Nevertheless, I’ll make sure it gets done this time, although I can’t commit to a specific timeline.”

But Friday, nearly 16 months after Liggins’ pledge to provide the information, Ferguson said she’s still waiting.

Liggins had not as of Saturday afternoon responded to Herald-Leader interview questions about the issue and the requests.

In addition to the more specific salary and position information, Ferguson is also asking for a list of positions at the district’s Central Office that have been previously cut. Liggins has said several jobs totaling \$9 million have been eliminated in the office.

“I’d like to see that list of positions,” Ferguson said.

FAYETTE COUNTY OCCUPATIONAL LICENSE TAX RATE INCREASE

An advertisement for a Friday, Sept. 5 public hearing in Friday’s Herald-Leader says discussion may include mention of a previous proposal requesting the levy of an occupational license tax of 0.75 percent.

However, Thursday night, Liggins said he was recommending the proposal be taken off the table.

Friday, district spokesperson Miranda Scully told the Herald-Leader, “The ad in today’s paper was scheduled to post prior to last night’s meeting. The OLT is ‘off the table,’ as stated in the Herald Leader.”



KARSTEN MORAN NYT

A polling site inside LaGuardia High School in New York on Nov. 5, 2024. President Donald Trump said late Saturday that he would issue an executive order to require voter identification for all U.S. elections, a continuation of his efforts to overhaul the nation’s election laws.

Trump says he will sign executive order mandating voter ID

BY YAN ZHUANG
NYT News Service

President Donald Trump said late Saturday that he would issue an executive order to require voter identification for all U.S. elections, a continuation of his efforts to overhaul the nation’s election laws, which he has long attacked and falsely blamed for his 2020 election loss.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said, “Voter I.D. Must Be Part of Every Single Vote. NO EXCEPTIONS! I Will Be Doing An Executive Order To That End!!!” He did not provide further details about the order.

He also reiterated his intention to restrict mail-in voting except for those who are very ill or in the military serving far away, as well as his opposition to voting machines.

The announcement signals Trump’s latest effort to influence election

laws using an executive order, something that he has dubious authority to do. The Constitution gives the president no explicit authority to regulate elections. Rather, it gives states the power to decide the rules of elections, oversee voting and try to prevent fraud. It gives Congress the ability to override state laws on voting. Any executive order from the president regarding elections is likely to see immediate legal challenges.

Trump and his allies have started a wide-ranging effort to gain any advantage they can before the midterm elections, which are set for November 2026.

In August, Trump said that a team of lawyers was preparing an executive order to end all mail-in ballots and wrote on social media that the executive order would “help bring HONESTY to the 2026 Midterm Elections.” He has long opposed mail-in

voting and falsely claimed it was a source of fraud after he lost the 2020 presidential election to Joe Biden.

In March, Trump signed an executive order seeking to require people to show government-issued proof of U.S. citizenship to register to vote in federal elections. The order was swiftly challenged in court, and a federal judge blocked the vast majority of the order in June.

The judge, Denise J. Casper of the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts, sided with states that had sued to stop the requirements, writing in her judgment that the states were likely to succeed in showing that the order exceeded Trump’s authority and risked disenfranchising some of the electorate. Casper was appointed by President Barack Obama.

“The Constitution does not grant the president any specific powers over elections,” she wrote.

Despite turnover, federal investigation into KY juvenile justice centers continues

BY JOHN CHEVES
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FRANKFORT

The U.S. Department of Justice is continuing its civil rights investigation into conditions at Kentucky juvenile detention centers, despite massive staff turnover at the federal agency since President Donald Trump took office in January, state officials said Friday.

“It’s ongoing,” Mona Womack, deputy secretary of the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet, told the Herald-Leader after a state legislative hearing at the Capitol Annex.

“We are fully complying with them,” Womack said. “We just completed a document and information request. It remains ongoing.”

State officials have not been given an estimated date for the investigation’s completion, she added.

The Department of Justice has refused to publicly comment on the status of its investigation since December, when it held community forums in Kentucky to hear people speak about problems at the state’s Department of Juvenile Justice.

The probe’s continuation was no sure thing. Under Trump, the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division has lost hundreds of employees to firings, resignations and reassignments to other jobs.

And it has retreated from some of its pending civil rights actions. That includes a federal consent decree aimed at reforming the troubled Louisville Metro Police Department. The agreement came in response to the fatal shooting by Louisville

police of Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman and emergency room technician, among other police abuses in Kentucky’s largest city.

The Department of Justice announced its Kentucky juvenile justice investigation in May 2024 following several years of reporting by the Lexington Herald-Leader into chronic abuse and neglect in the detention centers; subsequent state legislative oversight hearings and a critical audit by state Auditor Allison Ball’s office; and multiple lawsuits alleging mistreatment filed by youths and former state employees.

Federal and state officials have gone through this procedure before. Kentucky created its Department of Juvenile Justice in the 1990s as part of a consent decree with the Justice Department under President Bill Clinton because of the mistreatment of youths held in state custody.

On Friday, Kentucky Juvenile Justice Commissioner Randy White gave an update on his agency’s progress to the Legislative Oversight and Investigations Committee, which has held occasional hearings on the eight juvenile detention centers where 248 youths were held as of this week.

White said the state is expanding the juvenile detention centers in Breathitt, Fayette and McCracken counties and hopes to have two much-needed facilities in Jefferson County within the next two years. The closing of the Louisville Metro Juvenile Detention Center due to budget cuts several years ago put a great strain on the state’s juvenile detention system,

particularly the detention center in rural Adair County.

However, White said, he regrets that the legislature so far has failed to fund Gov. Andy Beshear’s requests for two new all-girls juvenile detention centers to help keep youths safely segregated by gender, and a high-acuity mental health facility for youths who need treatment somewhere other than a correctional facility.

The Department of Juvenile Justice has been forced to become the “custodian of last resort” for youths with mental illness who can’t find a bed in a private treatment facility because of their potential for aggressive behavior, White said, but the detention centers aren’t properly equipped to help them.

The sponsor of past bills that would have funded those projects, Sen. Danny Carroll, R-Paducah, told his colleagues they need to address the mental health needs of youths in state custody and provide more safe places for girls in detention.

“Please understand that we are still at risk of another consent decree from DOJ,” Carroll said to other members of the oversight committee on Friday.

“We have gotten somewhat of a reprieve because they’ve had some turnover in staff, the staff that was actually reviewing our issues in our state, so that’s kind of been put back,” Carroll said. “We need to act on this before it gets to that point, and the female issues, the mental health issues, those are the two critical issues remaining.”