



Calvin Ball
County Executive



HoCoPoLitSo
HOWARD COUNTY POETRY & LITERATURE SOCIETY

Howard County Youth Poet Laureate Guidelines and Application Instructions

The Howard County Youth Poet Laureate program, in partnership with the Office of County Executive Calvin Ball, the Howard County Arts Council, and the Howard County Poetry & Literature Society (HoCoPoLitSo), will help amplify the power of youth expression, celebrate community, and promote literacy and literary arts in Howard County.

The Youth Poet Laureate, an honorary one-year position formally appointed by the County Executive, will act as an ambassador for literacy, arts, and youth expression and demonstrate a passion for poetry and its power to connect our communities through local public readings and participation in civic events. Along with the official title, the Youth Poet Laureate will receive an honorarium of \$500.

The next Youth Poet Laureate will serve from September 2026 through August 2027 and will receive an honorarium of \$500 paid in two equal installments of \$250 at the beginning and end of their term. The Howard County Arts Council (HoCo Arts) administers this program in partnership with Howard County Poetry & Literature Society (HoCoPoLitSo).

Eligibility Criteria for the Howard County Youth Poet Laureate

The Howard County Youth Poet Laureate program seeks young writers who are passionate about their poetry and their community. In order to be eligible to apply, you must:

- Be a current Howard County resident, and either live in Howard County , between September 2026 and August 2027 or be available to present in-person at public events in Howard County during this timeframe (for example, a resident who will be attending a college or university next year within commuting distance of Howard County).
- Be between the ages of 14 (and a freshman in High School) and 21 at the time of application.
- Demonstrate community engagement in the arts.
- Be the creator of original poetic work.

HoCo Arts and HoCoPoLitSo Trustees, Board members, and employees and their immediate family members are not eligible to apply. Former HoCoPoLitSo Bauder Youth on Board members need to have resigned from the Board at least 60 days before applying. The same person cannot serve consecutive terms as Howard County Youth Poet Laureate.

Duties of the Howard County Youth Poet Laureate

The Youth Poet Laureate shall serve as an ambassador for literacy, poetry, and youth expression by participating in 5 to 8 public and/or civic events during the 2026-27 term. Examples of Youth Poet Laureate events and related activities include:

1. Participation in literary community activities in Howard County, such as the annual Blackbird Poetry Festival produced by HoCoPoLitSo and Howard Community College during National Poetry Month, or HoCoPoLitSo's, Wilde Reading Series.
2. Participation in up to 4 readings and speaking engagements for the Howard County Executive and County Departments as determined and scheduled through HoCo Arts in coordination with the Office of the County Executive.
3. Participation in social media activity related to Youth Poet Laureate events and projects.
4. After their term as Youth Poet Laureate is complete, at their discretion, serve on the selection panel(s) for future Howard County Youth Poet Laureates.

To Apply

To Apply online: [Click Here](#)

Once you have entered the system, please review the complete application and guidelines, which include detailed instructions. You will need to prepare digital and video work samples, a brief biography and statement about what poetry means to you, and a description of your community engagement in any aspect of the arts. In addition, you will need to secure one or two references from adults (non-family members) who know you and can speak to your community involvement and/or school activities as well as the power of your poetry.

Applications for Howard County Youth Poet Laureate open on February 2, 2026. The deadline to submit applications is April 30, 2026.

If for any reason you are not able to submit application materials online, please contact Dana Whipkey, HoCo Arts Grants and Special Projects Coordinator at grantsandprojects@hocoarts.org or 410.313. ARTS(2787).

Timeline

Application opens: February 2, 2026

Application deadline: April 30, 2026

Selection notification: August, 2026

Selection announcement: September, 2026

Application Review

Applications are evaluated by an independent panel of literary arts professionals and educators with expertise and experience in poetry. The panel will review each eligible application and recommend up to 3 Youth Poet Laureate finalists, who may be invited for an interview with the County Executive, HoCo Arts and/or HoCoPoLitSo. The County Executive will make the final decision and announce the Youth Poet Laureate.

Review Criteria

The application for the Youth Poet Laureate program is competitive. Work samples are critical to each application and are carefully considered during the review process by an independent review panel. The role of each panelist is to review and score each eligible application based on the materials submitted per the established criteria cited below:

Mechanics and Technique

The work samples demonstrate the applicant's competence in spelling, grammar,

and formatting and demonstrate the applicant's knowledge of poetry as an art form and familiarity with its tools and techniques.

Clarity

The work samples demonstrate the applicant's capability to convey the subject matter and narrative in a clear and legible manner.

Style/Lyricism

The work samples demonstrate the uniqueness of the applicant's tone, rhythm, and capability as a poetic voice for our contemporary age.

Imagery

The work samples demonstrate the applicant's evocative sensory power through descriptive language.

Resonance

The work samples demonstrate the applicant's poetry has emotional impact or value and has potential to illuminate and contribute to the diversity and vitality of Howard County's artistic community.

Work Samples

Applicants should pay close attention to the content of work sample submissions and how they are labeled and should adhere to the work sample instructions outlined below or risk ineligibility for consideration of selection as Youth Poet Laureate.

- **Digital Files**

Submit three (3) to five (5) poems (or excerpts) typewritten that represent your best artistic achievements, not to exceed ten (10) pages total.

Compile all of your poems typewritten along with a cover page listing the titles of each in order into a single .PDF document. Use Times, Helvetica, or equivalent font, no smaller than 12-point in size and formatted with at least 1" margins on all sides.

The total page length of all poetry samples and cover page combined should be 11 pages or fewer. Additional pages will not be reviewed.

Name your .PDF file accordingly: *last name_first name_poetry samples*.

- **Video Files**

Submit a video of you performing or reciting one of your original poems with the application, not to exceed five (5) minutes in length. Video samples must be hosted on online platforms, such as Soundcloud, Vimeo or YouTube. The video samples will not be shared outside of necessary review process.

In the space indicated on the application, provide a link to the video including the title of the work.

The video sample may be performed with or without an audience.

- **Recommendations**

Submit one to two recommendations from teachers, advisors, or other adults (non-family members) who know you and can speak to your community involvement and/or school activities related to the arts, your engagement in writing poetry, and the power of your poetry.

TIP: We recommend that you contact potential references early in the process and ask them if they would be willing to write a recommendation of up to 750 words-

Once they confirm, download the recommendation form, email it to your reference(s), and remind them to mail the form to the Arts Council in a sealed envelope by April 30, 2026.

Review Process

Only complete applications successfully submitted online through SUBMITTABLE will be accepted and reviewed. Once the application deadline passes, no alterations or additions may be made to the application unless clarification is requested in writing by HoCo Arts staff. Applicants must then meet any revision deadlines as specified in writing or the application will be withdrawn.

The Youth Poet Laureate application has a 3-step review process:

Step 1: HoCo Arts Staff Review

Initial review of applications for compliance with eligibility and submission requirements is made by HoCo Arts staff. If staff detects issues, they may call upon applicants to clarify information, to furnish proof of eligibility, etc.

Should an applicant be asked to clarify and/or revise their application, the applicant must meet all revision deadlines as specified by staff or the application will be withdrawn.

Step 2: HoCoPoLitSo Artistic Review Panel

HoCoPoLitSo will coordinate the Artistic Review Panel meeting, go over the meeting protocols, and ensure that all eligible applications are reviewed and discussed in an orderly manner.

Each panelist first reviews and scores the applications and work samples on their own; the full panel then meets together via in-person or online video conference to discuss, and finalize nominations for finalists recommended to the County Executive.

Co Art's Committee on Grants and/or staff will be present during the full panel review to observe the process and/or answer questions from the panel about the program. These representatives will not participate in the panel discussions, only clarify eligibility of applicants, ensure review protocols are adhered to, and answer questions about the program and application process.

To ensure the Youth Poet Laureate program is free from conflicts of interest and the appearance of such conflicts, panelists are required to disclose any current or prospective affiliations they or their immediate family members have with an actual or potential applicant and/or disclose any past or current adversarial relationships with applicants. Panelists are not permitted to participate in discussions or scoring of any applicant with whom they have an affiliation or conflict.

Step 3: County Executive Final Review

The review panel's final scores of all eligible applications are presented to the HoCo Arts Committee on Grants, who then submit up to three (3) finalists to the County Executive for final approval. The County Executive's decision is final.

HoCo Arts and HoCoPoLitSo reserve the right, at their sole discretion, to revise, withdraw, and/or reissue the Youth Poet Laureate opportunity at any time and for any reason, which includes, but is not limited to, the right to extend the deadline and timeline, reject all submission entries, revise and/or not award funds, and/or solicit additional applications.