

Testimony for the County Council Budget Hearing

Scheduled for April 2022

**TOPIC: FUNDING TO EXTEND EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

Greeting our esteemed County Council members, Thank you for your time. My name is Evelyn Okutu and I am here today to ask for MORE FUNDING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN MONTGOMRY COUNTY.

I borrowed the slogan “If You don’t use it, you loose it” from the “BASICS”, to encourage my then 4ry old to encourage learning at home. Each time I say the slogan she runs to pick a book for us to read together, pull out puzzles or other educative interactive games /activities.

As a mother, like any other parent here today we want nothing but the best for our children. So when I learned about how the connective tissues in the brains of babies which our referred to as neurons can easily be lost/die if not fed or nourished through early intervention, I knew I had to do better by my last child. So, we started engaging her early in reading, play, the Judy center programs and headstart. Thankfully, she is reading above grade level today. Yet she has a long way to go as a kindergartener.

Research has shown that the investment in early education specifically among disadvantaged children, improves children’s’ cognitive abilities, as well as critical behavioral traits like sociability, motivation, and self-esteem. It is surprising to learn that the United States falls behind other countries in this regard

the investment, into Early childhood education resources.

Though Montgomery County has partnerships that support early childhood education, these programs are heavily underfunded, thus they have very limited capacity to absorb the needs within our County.

The well-known Pre-K and Headstart programs are also restricted in their enrollment criteria because of lack of adequate funding. Therefore, families who fall within the so-called “CLIFF” are not income eligible. These children are disadvantaged because they are denied the benefits of early education.

Lessons learned from the pandemic, proves how virtual platforms could be used to expand early childhood education. Therefore, I lend my voice to advocate for more funding to expand early childhood programs to all and underserved children within our county.

According to the CDC early childhood education not only improves the cognitive and social development of children ages 3 or 4 years, but also, these interventions tend to improve a child’s overall development and act as a protects’ against the future onset of adult disease and disabilities. Other benefits include but not limited to the following

- reductions in crime, welfare dependency, and child abuse and neglect
- savings from reduced grade retention
- savings in health care costs
- savings in remedial education and childcare costs
- improvement in health outcomes associated with education
- earnings gains associated with high school graduation

- better jobs and higher earnings throughout employment years for children participating in these programs

All children require early education to build and grow their brain cells(neurons). Building upon the foundation, that early education and school readiness is a critical element in preparing our children to be successful in this competitive global environment.

I would be grateful if more funding is provided for early childhood education programs.

Thank you.

Reference

CDC. n.d. Early Childhood Education. Referenced from:
<https://www.cdc.gov/policy/hst/hi5/earlychildhoodeducation/index.html>