

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Janelle Wong (Bethesda, MD)

FY 23 Operating Budget

My name is Janelle Wong. I moved to this county 10 years ago. I am a political scientist and have taught classes on politics for more than 20 years in Los Angeles, Seattle, and other places, but it was not until I became a resident of Montgomery County that I got involved in local politics.

I was compelled to get more focused on local politics when I heard the students in our district call for more institutional efforts to address racial integration and racial inequality in our schools. The unique role of students and young people in our local fight for equity and their attention to boundaries and the consequences of segregation moved me to join the NAACP Parents' Council at my local school and to work with other Asian American parents to support these students' efforts.

And this is why I support the Black and Brown Coalition's priorities and call for a budget with students at the center. In the wake of decades of racial disparities in our county and a pandemic that has had unequal impact across racial groups, the county has a special role and must step in and request MCPS provide a transparent budget that ties staff and spending to student outcomes.

If cuts are required in the future, this also means funds and resources devoted to students and populations with the greatest needs must be protected. Please do not allow MCPS to underfund or make cuts that will undermine racial and socioeconomic equity during this critical time. Our kids and our communities are counting on you in the face of pressure to stand up for racial equity.

I also want to underscore support for the MD Blueprint for Education and the need to institutionalize and support a diverse and effective teaching force in our high impact schools. A devoted cadre of teachers is already working in those schools, and we need to enhance and incentivize even more highly experienced and effective teachers and leaders with proven track records at these schools.

We know there are stark inequities that directly impact the experiences and outcomes of Black, Brown, and low-income Asian Americans in our county.

We know that budget allocations are not the only incentive you can offer teachers and leaders, but budget allocations are a direct indicator of values, and there is money available now that can and should be used here to produce real results.

Bottom line: I will say it again - I stand with the NAACP Parents' Council and Black and Brown Coalition to urge the County Council to hold MCPS accountable for assigning resources to students with the greatest need. The support needed by these students should not be subject to any budget cuts.

I am here as an individual, but I am also part of the Black + Brown Coalition. Many faces; one goal.