

Good evening,

My name is Allison Jacobus, and I am a MCPS school psychologist at Rolling Terrace Elementary, North Chevy Chase Elementary, and Silver Creek Middle School. Currently, I am the only school psychologist for 1,760 students. I have been a school psychologist in MCPS for 9 years. I am also the parent of a child who will attend MCPS when he is older.

I am passionate about my career in school psychology because I believe my calling is to provide mental health services to children. In my years in MCPS, I have managed to provide group and individual counseling to children in every building I have worked in, despite having a student ratio that is more than 3 times the nationally recommended ratio of 1:500 students.

My ability to expand my capacity to provide mental health services is threatened by MCPS' current inability to retain and recruit school psychologists. I had hope that our staff to student ratios would improve over time and our ability to provide direct services to students would increase. However, we are facing the prospect of 28 open positions this fall, which will result in schools being added to our caseloads and having our time with students decline significantly.

The County Council has been supportive of school psychologists in the past and I am grateful that the members prioritize providing direct mental health services to our students, who themselves have been advocating for more support. While it is my understanding there is nothing the Council can currently act upon in the recommended MCPS budget on this issue, I am hopeful that your on-going support in increasing the number of school psychologists in MCPS will lead to a positive outcome as MCPS enters into contract negotiations in the fall and in future budget proposals. We need to have a more competitive salary than our neighboring districts to attract and retain qualified candidates. We need more school psychologists to provide direct, face-to-face mental health services for our students, who deserve to have their mental well-being become the priority it should be.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Allison Jacobus