

## **Testimony of SEIU Local 500 President Pia Morrison**

### **Montgomery County Council**

**April 21, 2022**

### **FY23 Operating Budget Hearing**

#### **SUPPORT**

Good evening, Council President Alborno, Council Vice President Glass, and all members of the County Council. On behalf of the members of SEIU Local 500, I would like to thank each of you for your extraordinary work during this ongoing pandemic.

As you know, SEIU Local 500 represents more than 20,000 members, more than 9,000 of whom are employed as supporting services professionals at MCPS. Our members at MCPS are bus drivers, security guards, food services professionals, and paraeducators. They work in offices, media and technology, and building services. SEIU Local 500 is a union of educators, non-profit workers, and caregivers. We are all invested in the strength and vitality of our local public schools – professionally and personally.

I come before you today on behalf of all our members to enthusiastically endorse the proposed budget set forth by the County Executive and to respectfully ask the Council to fully fund it. The budget request is \$117.4 million over Maintenance of Effort and almost \$150 million over last year's budget request for MCPS. Our amazing members at MCPS have never worked harder, both on the front lines and behind the scenes. Last year they transitioned to teaching remotely, distributed literally millions of meals to children in need, delivered Chromebooks and provided the technical and logistical support to make virtual learning possible. Working successfully with teachers, our paraeducator members helped make distance learning successful. Our members at MCPS, regardless of their profession or title, have gone above and beyond for the children and families of Montgomery County. This budget recognizes their efforts and accounts for their needs.

However, over the past year we have seen many (number if you have it) support staff members leave a profession that they love due to receiving low pay, being overworked, and experiencing a lack of respect. We need to do better for our faculty and staff and thus do better by our children and the families of Montgomery County. In May, you have an opportunity to begin the process of addressing these concerns by passing this budget. We will continue to work with MCPS, the Board of Education, the County Executive, you, and state leaders on addressing the needs of our school system and our amazing support staff.

Once again, I thank you all for your time and your hard work throughout this ordeal and reaffirm the support of our members for this budget.