

Good evening , President Glass, Vice President Friedson and members of the board

My name is Johanna Thomas and I live in Burtonsville Maryland. My husband and I moved to this community after being an active duty military family for 20 years. I've had my sons enrolled in over 4 elementary schools in various states, and this current school where we had a choice to move instead of the Navy telling us where to move is sadly in the greatest disrepair. Yet we are in the wealthiest county we have ever lived in. We chose Burtonsville because of the diversity here. We have neighbors from so many countries and our son has diverse friends and classmates as well. We know that diversity makes a positive difference in students' lives as it does in our lives.

If Montgomery county is committed to equity for all its diverse citizenry, especially its youngest then you must be committed to the students at Burtonsville Elementary in funding the new school they desperately need.

I am here to express my support for the full funding request for a new replacement school for Burtonsville Elementary. The current facilities at Burtonsville Elementary are no longer suitable for the needs of our students and staff.

The issue of overcrowding is a major concern, with students having limited space to learn and grow. This not only impacts their education but also their mental and physical well-being. Furthermore, the current grounds of the school pose safety concerns for both students and staff, with cars and buses navigating narrow, inadequate pathways during drop off and pickup times daily. Parents are helping cars and buses to safely navigate the grounds daily? Why? Why is this acceptable for our students?

Additionally, the current school has limited space for lunch, leading to lunch periods that run the entire day. My son has his lunch in the morning, when he just had breakfast at home, and

sometimes he's too full from breakfast to want to eat all his lunch. This then leads to his afternoon with an empty stomach until the end of the day which is close to 4pm. I know that this has caused academic performance issues as well as focus issues for him. And I am sure he is not the only child at Burtonsville that because of the lunch schedule behavior performance issues are created. The "No Kid Hungry" organization conducted a study in 2020, which showed that children who struggle with hunger tend to have lower academic performance and are more likely to repeat a grade or have poor attendance in school. The study also found that children facing hunger are more likely to experience behavioral and emotional issues, which can further impact their ability to learn and succeed in school. The findings emphasize the critical importance of addressing childhood hunger as a means to improve educational outcomes and overall well-being of children.

How is this treatment of our students equitable? The county prides itself on equity yet our students are not included in the equity.

In light of these pressing issues, I strongly urge the Montgomery County Council to prioritize funding for a new school in Burtonsville. Our children deserve a safe, modern and appropriate learning environment and I believe that this new school will provide just that. My child, as all students at Burtonsville Elementary, deserve an environment conducive to learning that is an adequate school like their peers in Montgomery county.

Thank you for your time and consideration.