

Good evening President Friedson and Council members.

My name is Sally Murek, and I'm here to speak against the proposed reduction in the MCPS FY25 operating budget.

As a supporting services employee of MCPS, I serve as the Paraeducator Program Manager. Daily I see the growing needs of our students and the dwindling human resources needed to support them.

As you are very well aware, our students are presenting with greater challenges not just in academic achievement, but also in social-emotional, and economic needs. One of the best supports we can offer them is consistency. They need to see and build relationships with adults they can depend on and trust. This means having paraeducators and teachers who will be there from semester to semester and year to year.

Sadly, this is not happening. MCPS has a recruitment and retention problem. The underlying reason for this is lower pay than people can earn in the private sector.

Recruiting and retaining good qualified employees, who are dedicated to our students, is the foundation of our work. We cannot educate and care for our students if we don't have qualified staff, and if we don't have enough staff. Many supporting services positions have remained unfilled for more than a year, which has stretched the current staff to work harder until many decide it is too much and they leave us, further exacerbating our staffing crisis. And, now the proposed budget seeks to reduce funding?

This cycle needs to end. There was a time when our excellent negotiated benefits would attract qualified employees even if wages were lower than on the community marketplace, but today we need more. We need to focus spending on good wages which will attract the people we need who are qualified and dedicated to our mission.

I understand that you as the County Council do not have purview over the spending of the MCPS budget, but you do have control on the final budget provisions which will allow us to continue to negotiate for the necessary wage allocations towards proper recruitment, hiring, retainment, and training with continuing professional development for the MCPS supporting services staff.

We need to support and educate our children. This proposed budget falls short and I ask for your support in restoring the vital funding necessary to improve student learning conditions.

Sally Murek

District 2
