

Good afternoon. My name is Sarah Manchester and I am a math teacher at Takoma Park Middle School. During my 28 years in MCPS, I have seen many shifts in education, including the rise of technology. Over the past decade, Chromebook laptops have become ubiquitous in our classrooms. Chromebooks give students access to learning activities and educational resources from around the world. They can offer students immediate and individualized feedback, a difficult task for one teacher with 30 students taking paper assessments.

However, Chromebooks have great potential to be misused by students in distracting, dishonest, and unsafe ways. Teachers need an appropriate tool to guide students' Chromebook use. For thousands of MCPS teachers, this tool is GoGuardian, a program that has been eliminated from next year's budget. Concerned about its loss, I conducted a survey. First, a quote from a teacher who had not used GoGuardian.

*"My students are frequently playing games and not paying attention. I am on my feet every moment, but it's still an issue; it's so easy for students to switch windows. Even if "caught", they can go back as soon as you step away. Please believe me, teachers desperately need a solution!"*

Many survey respondents believe a solution already exists: GoGuardian. Here are two of their voices:

*"Eliminating GoGuardian as an instructional resource will have a devastating impact, particularly in large classes."*

*"Much of our curriculum is online. Many of my middle school students lack the self-control to avoid playing games and visiting unrelated sites. Eliminating GoGuardian is the worst decision MCPS could make."*

Teachers also use GoGuardian to check in with students about their work and their well-being. In the words of one teacher:

*"Students may suffer from anxiety or struggle with asking for help. GoGuardian allows me to communicate in a way that preserves their privacy and provides "frequent check-ins" - an accommodation for my students with IEPs and 504s."*

Finally, GoGuardian allows teachers to spot concerning behavior and intervene. Here are two examples.

*"I have caught students looking at pornography and weapons. I have been able to stop them and get them help ONLY because of GoGuardian."*

*"I once stopped a student who was contemplating violence against others in the form of a school shooting because I noticed his alarming google searches via GoGuardian."*

You may wonder, if GoGuardian is so valuable, why is it being eliminated? The rationale given at the January budget meeting was to save money. GoGuardian costs \$250,000, which is 0.007% of our operating budget. Is there other technology to help students use Chromebooks responsibly? The answer is yes. However, 'you get what you pay for' so any program as effective as GoGuardian will likely come with a similar price tag. Thus, I request that the Council fully fund the MCPS budget, so that decisions about classroom technology are not based on the cheapest option but are made in the best interest of our students. Thank you.