

Good evening, and thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak before you today.

My name is Jeff Brown, and I serve as the principal of Roberto Clemente Middle School in Germantown. Over the past nine years, it has been my honor to lead a vibrant community that mirrors the diversity and resilience of Germantown itself. My dedication to Montgomery County Public Schools spans 21 years, a journey that has taken me through various roles across Poolesville, Damascus, Richard Montgomery, Wootton, Seneca Valley, and now at Roberto Clemente Middle School. My commitment to our schools is a family legacy, inspired by my parents and aunts who retired from MCPS, laying the groundwork for my path in education.

This past year has been challenging, marked by an unprecedented number of administrative retirements and transitions. From my firsthand experience, this trend is largely due to the delicate balance we strive to maintain daily: the commitment to our students'

success against a backdrop of constrained resources. Just today, we faced a stark example of this imbalance with nine staff members absent and only three substitute teachers available. This shortage forced me and other staff to step in to cover classes, sacrificing valuable planning time.

Our district continues to lag behind neighboring districts in terms of compensation, resulting in the loss of talented new and existing administrators. At the heart of ensuring our schools' safety is the imperative to fill every position with the most qualified individuals. Moreover, the comprehensive support for everyone's wellness through restorative justice coaches, social workers, and school psychologists is crucial. Although fully funding the budget will not immediately solve all resource disparities, it is a critical step towards closing the gap.

The paradox of wellness in education looms large: we expect our schools to be all-encompassing support systems, yet we offer limited support to the educators bearing this weight. Despite recent scrutiny, I can attest to the dedication of countless administrators working tirelessly to enhance student achievement.

Remember, the conditions under which our staff work directly influence our students' learning environments. To aspire for excellence from our team, we must provide them with the necessary resources to achieve it.

When there is a tragic event or safety is compromised, no one is asking me what my salary is. When Clemente opened a new Autism program and students and families are feeling academic success for the first time, no one asks how much the tables and chairs cost. When a child learns to read or learns English no one is asking why I have four ESOL teachers. Leadership Matters.

I am before you as a testament to the dedication that runs deep within MCPS, appealing for your support to fully fund the proposed budget. Together, we make a substantial difference in the lives of our students and educators.

Thank you for considering this pivotal investment in the future of our community.