

Kenneth Maton FY25 Budget Testimony:
Restore Previous Year Funding for Restorative Justice

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My name is Ken Maton. I am a resident of Silver Spring in County District 4. For three decades, I was lead evaluator of the Meyerhoff Scholars Program at UMBC, now a national model of success for African American students. I observed firsthand the impact of sustained investment of resources by leadership in an evidence-based initiative. The Board is presented with a similar, timely opportunity.

I am submitting this testimony to request that the Board add funding to the proposed MCPS budget to restore previous years' funding for restorative justice—thus maintaining the 9 Restorative Justice (RJ) Specialist positions in the budget and also including funding for RJ coaches' stipends in each secondary school.

I am a recently retired UMBC Community Psychology Professor with expertise in evaluation of programs focused on students of color. I taught about restorative justice, supervised RJ doctoral research, and helped introduce RJ as a resource for students. Locally, I am a participant in Impact Silver Spring's anti-racist activities.

Well-designed evaluations underscore the benefits of high-quality RJ. Most striking is the recent 2023 study of Chicago high schools, which found that students in RJ schools showed nearly a 20% decline in suspensions and arrests, and improved school climate. Of special note, Black males benefited most from RJ, achieving reduced absences, suspensions, and arrests, and enhanced math scores. The findings were centered in schools with high-intensive RJ coaching. **These findings bode well for MCPS, per the reported decline in suspensions for Black males in RJ-focused schools.**

I so wish RJ was available to me in middle school when, due to being Jewish, I was bullied and assaulted on multiple occasions. When implemented with fidelity, the three pillars of restorative justice would have yielded accountability and relationship, instead of shame and avoidance.

I urge the County to **add funding to the proposed MCPS budget to restore previous years' funding for restorative justice**, an evidence-based program shown to enhance the academic and life success of students of color both nationally, and in our county.