Barbara Schaffer_FY25Budget_Support
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Barbara Schaffer
Rockville, Maryland 20850

MONTGOMERY COUNTY FY25 BUDGET TESTIMONY

My name is Barbara Schaffer. I am a resident of Resident of Rockville in District 3. I am concerned citizen about the education, emotional and physical environment our county provides to our children. I am requesting that the County Council add funding to the proposed MCPS budget to restore the previous years' staffing for restorative justice, including 9 Restorative Justice Specialists and all stipends for Restorative Justice Coaches in all secondary schools.

Each person deserves to feel physically and emotionally safe and secure in order to learn and grow. Our public schools are a reflection of our community: they contain students of various races, abilities, and genders each of whom mature at their own rate. Punitive discipline alienates and isolates students. Rather than improving their behavior, it can intensify and worsen their attitudes toward school. Continuing to implement a Restorative Justice program will enable our students to enjoy a more inclusive, stable, and positive environment that fosters understanding and better communication, and provides them the opportunity to repair harm. It offers a forum to both resolve conflicts and hold people accountable for their actions within the school community.

In schools around the country –e.g., Denver, San Francisco, Oakland, Minneapolis, and Chicago, among other cities– where Restorative Justice programs have been implemented, fewer students have been suspended, expelled, and/or referred to law enforcement and, at the same time, students and educators report a more supportive and stable learning environment, healthier relationships between students and teachers, and a reduction in racial disparities in school discipline.

Our budgets are moral documents that reflect our County's values. I urge the Council to pass a budget that reflects the values of equity, diversity, and justice for everyone in our County.

Thank you.