

Chair Freidson and Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Council:

My name is Carlene Butt-Pruitt, and I serve as the executive vice-president of SEIU Local 500. I am here today to thank you for fully funding the County Executive's budget for Montgomery College budget and to ask you to address the shortcomings in the County Executive's budget for Montgomery County Public School System. This budget is inadequate to fully support the needs of our students, staff, and community.

In the budget submitted by MCPS, the superintendent and president of the Board of Education noted that the changes in funds request will allow MPCPS to provide our students and families with what they need and will continue to address the opportunity and access gaps that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It is our responsibility as leaders within Montgomery County to establish an environment where staff are able to ensure that all of our students are community, college, and career ready.

The existing staffing shortages have been impacting our day-to-day operations. Imagine being a paraeducator assigned to help implement accommodations for identified students on a daily basis and being told that there are not enough substitute teachers, so today they will be the teacher. That means that students did not get the support they needed to be successful. Imagine again being told that same message the next work day. Or imagine being an overworked school administrative secretary having to help figure out how to assist with classroom and lunch recess coverage, while providing back-up in the health room while attempting to do the many tasks required daily to keep the school's main office functioning, which includes allowing people to enter the school. Did you know that they have the largest job description in MPCPS? Picture yourself as the maintenance support professional who has several repair orders to complete, but not the additional hands or peers to get the work done knowing that you could be paid a lot more to work in the private sector and would feel accomplished versus frustrated daily.

In MCPS, we are already seeing increased workloads, burnout, and decreased morale. Staff are imperative to student success and they set the tone for learning. The quality of education received by our students is the consequence of adopting a budget that does not adequately fund our school system.

The existing budget shortfalls continue to result in losing qualified educators and support professionals to surrounding counties and private sector businesses where their skill sets are valued and they get paid for all of the hours and the workload they carry. Do we want current staff and potential staff that we are trying to recruit to fill the hundreds of positions we currently have open, to work elsewhere?

By not fully funding the MCPS budget, students and the staff who serve them will be impacted. Our student's learning conditions are the working conditions in which our staff operate. Therefore, I ask you, the members of this council, to honor the negotiated contracts, including pay increases and benefits, for all staff in MCPS. I implore you to fully fund the MCPS budget.

Thank you,

Carlene Butt-Pruitt

Carlene Butt-Pruitt
Executive Vice-President
SEIU Local 500