

Chair Friedson and Honorable Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am Pia Morrison, President of SEIU Local 500, one of the largest public sector unions in Maryland with over 20 thousand members strong. I come before you today as an ally and friend of this community. I call on you to address the shortcomings proposed in the County Executive's budget in regards to the Montgomery County Public School System. This budget is inadequate to support our students, staff, and community.

Underfunding our school system makes little sense when exacerbated staffing shortages are already stretching folks thin. Faculty and staff are facing increased workloads, burnout, and decreased morale due to inadequate support. Which ultimately compromises the quality of education received by our most vulnerable students. We see this in staff caseloads for behavioral and mental health services that are staggeringly higher than national recommendations.

We also see how underfunding worsens existing inequities and thus undermines efforts to promote social and economic mobility. These budget shortfalls will result in a loss of educators to surrounding counties and other sectors where their highly valued skills will be compensated in a more commensurate manner. In the end, if this budget is somehow meant to be punitive for administrative shortcomings at MCPS, the only people being punished are the students and staff who will have much less to work with in the coming year.

I ask you, the members of this county council, to honor the negotiated contracts, including pay increases and benefits, for all educators and staff in our school system. The working conditions of our faculty and staff are the learning conditions of our students. Conditions that must be of the highest quality for the vitality and future of this community. I urge you to fully fund the MCPS budget.

Thank You,

Pia Morrison
President
SEIU Local 500