

## Kevin Beverly - Testimony before Council

A recent ReadyNation [study](#) finds that the nation's child care crisis costs \$172 billion in lost earnings, productivity, and revenue every year. This enormous economic burden impacts parents, their employers, and the nation's taxpayers. As I reviewed the County budget, there are many things that disturb me, but I believe we are woefully underfunding our child care supports. National research tells us that learning starts in utero and that 90% of brain development happens before a child turns 5. However, according to the Children's Opportunity Alliance we are only investing 2% of our total budget to support children ages 0-5, but they make up 7% of our community. In Montgomery County, when we say we care about education – everyone thinks about K-12, not ages 0-5. This is not only a MC problem, but a state problem and a national crisis.

When you look at the federal budget, nationally, our federal budget invests over \$800 billion a year in public funding for K-12 schools, which is approximately \$14,000 per student. In Montgomery County, in FY24, we invested \$3.1 billion in Montgomery County Public Schools for K-12, which is \$19,308 per student. Nationally, our federal child care investment is approximately \$40 billion a year in public funding for children ages 0-5, which is less than \$1,000 per student – and most is spent on 4 year olds. Even though we know learning begins before that. In Montgomery County, we invest \$175 million in

early care and education and there are approximately 60,000 ages 0-4 – which equates to \$3,000 per child.

Yet, if you talk to a parent who looks into paying for child care, it costs around \$20-25k per year for one child.

A budget is a fiscal document with moral implications, that demonstrates priorities. What we see in the numbers is that early care and education is not as important as K-12 and it needs to be. This year the Children's Opportunity Alliance put forward a recommendation to the County Executive to invest more in Working Parents Assistance. Adding \$16 million to Working Parents Assistance would allow our County to serve approximately 1,000 more children. Instead, we see \$500,000 which will only allow us to serve 30 more children. Yet we know we are only currently serving one in three of our most vulnerable children.

We all hoped that the creation of the Children's Opportunity Alliance would help us to disrupt, accelerate and, transformation our system and lead us towards faster solutions to address our local early care and education systems challenges. My theory of change is that people don't fear change, they fear loss. We need County leaders who are willing to lead on this critical economic issue.