

Good Evening County council,

My name is Beatris Martinez and before I get into why I am here. I would like to share a story.

It is September 1995 and there is a little girl starting kindergarten at an MCPS school. A little girl who unknowingly will experience firsthand what anxiety is. It began with the separation anxiety, being away from her mother was more than simply feeling sad. It was something that caused physical symptoms, feeling extremely nauseas with a deep ache in her belly that she did not comprehend.

During school lunch, the lunchroom was always too loud, all the children speaking, yelling, or simply chewing loudly overwhelmed and clouded her mind and she had no appetite. As the days went on, things did not get better. The little girl was not eating at school at all and one day she was forced to eat by a cafeteria monitor. Which caused her to vomit on the monitor. She was yelled at for it and the solution that was offered was that the little girl go eat alone in the nurse's office. Which helped but was that a solution?

Fast forward to 2022, there is a little boy. Same age, same school, going through the same feelings. Panic attacks, gagging, stomach aches, nausea and a nonstop suffering of nerves.

This little boy is my son, and the little girl struggling with the same anxieties was me.

Now these stories are unfortunately very similar. My son now going through the same exact experiences I had.

But this time there is a difference. And that difference is called linkages to learning, a program included in 33 Montgomery County

Public schools who provide health, behavioral and social services to children and families. Mine being one of them. For 30 years Linkages to Learning has partnered with DHHS to provide these services.

Linkages to Learning connected my son with a therapist who has given him the tools to better, not only his but also my family's mental health. In a client survey from 2025, they had a 95% satisfaction rate. I am here in support of them; I am here for every little child who has gone through the terrible experiences of anxiety and mental health challenges. I ask the county council to remember my story, and my child when reviewing the fiscal budget for 2027 so this program may be implemented in other schools.

As a mother and a 36 year Montgomery County resident, I think anyone in this room would agree that we want what is best for the children in this county. And that begins with early intervention and continued support for mental health services in our county. Thank you.