



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND**

**COUNCILMEMBER NANCY NAVARRO
DISTRICT 4**

**CHAIR, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND
FISCAL POLICY COMMITTEE**

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM

January 31, 2022

TO: Members of the County Council

FROM: Nancy Navarro, Chair, Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee

SUBJECT: Proposed initiative to expand wellness centers to all high schools

Recent events have again emphasized the need for us as a team to collaborate with Montgomery County Public Schools, the County executive, and his departments to craft a truly comprehensive set of resources and processes to safeguard the safety, security, and emotional well-being of our students. On February 9, 2022, the Education and Culture and the Public Safety committees are scheduled to review the ongoing work of Montgomery County Public Schools in re-evaluating the Community Engagement Officers program, the related Memorandum of Understanding and mental health supports. I welcome such a review, and look forward to its alignment with my prior proposal on a holistic approach that focuses on our students' mental and emotional well-being without compromising their physical safety as our parents and students expect, and as mandated by state law (see my memoranda of February 5, and March 3, 2021, attached).

In addition, as I mentioned at our Council session of January 25, 2022, I wish to reiterate my call for the establishment of a well-staffed and resourced wellness center in each high school that would provide the necessary safe and welcoming space for our students. I have had productive conversations with Gabe Albornoz, Council President and Chair of Health and Human Services and he is supportive of the need for a bold initiative like this. I envision a bold initiative that would set up the wellness centers as soon as possible using existing spaces and/or relocatable classrooms for instance, as we stand up the physical structures. These wellness centers would also house supports from culturally and linguistically proficient

resources like the Street Outreach Network, and others identified by Montgomery County Public Schools and the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as community stakeholders.

The timing is auspicious as we are approaching the budget season. As a first step, I am asking staff as a matter of urgency to provide the operating and capital cost of standing up a wellness center in each high school and alternative center. I understand that the operating cost of a wellness center is approximately \$1.1 million, while \$2.5 million is budgeted to build one stand-alone center. There are currently five high school wellness centers: Northwood, Gaithersburg, Watkins Mill, Wheaton, and Seneca Valley. Kennedy High School is currently under construction with a wellness center. The plan is to introduce the budget items for adoption by the full Council during this budget season. I would very much appreciate the support of my colleagues in this endeavor. Please let me know if you would like to be part of this effort.

Attachments

Copy to:

County Executive, Marc Elrich
Members of the Board of Education
Dr. Monifa McKnight
Dr. Raymond Crowel
Ms. Dira Treadvance
Ms. Sonia Mora
Ms. Marlene Michaelson
Ms. Vivian Yao
Ms. Essie McGuire