

Dear Members of the County Council,

I write today in my individual capacity as a homeowner and parent of four MCPS student with the lens of my position as Vice Chair of the Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee to express my support for our schools and my opposition to any increase in property taxes.

First and foremost, the county has not engaged in a Racial Equity Analysis of the county budget and proposed tax increase. The county is not doing enough to retain the middle-class taxpayers in the community and recent data showing we've lost population to Frederick County back up that assertion. The lack of a Racial Equity Analysis undermines the Council's ability to determine whether these population shifts are being driven by equity issues that could be addressed and undermine the Council's ability to make amendments to the budget to improve racial equity and social justice outcomes in the community.

I believe that much like the rent control issues that were before you last week, increases in the property tax will disproportionately impact minority and middle-class homeowners in the county that are already struggling with second jobs and a lack of wage increases that match the inflation we're struggling with. As a federal employee I received less than half the rate of inflation as a cost-of-living adjustment last year and have lost 20% of my real wages to inflation since I was hired in 2008. The county should be finding ways to cut spending in an inflationary period to reduce the impact to its tax base or raising taxes on those large landowners in Potomac and in the exclusionary zoning area known as the Agricultural Reserve.

As a parent our schools do need additional funding but what they need more is accountability and an independent Inspector General. The current setup does not provide MCPS or the public with certainty that billions we are pouring into our schools are being properly and lawfully spent and accounted for.

As a homeowner in search of a larger home for a growing family the proposed property tax increase is another reason for me to be looking outside of Montgomery County. My mortgage payment has crept from \$1392 when I purchased my home in 2014 to over \$1500 a month. I've worked a second job at Home Depot since 2014 to try and make ends meet. The County is not making it any easier.

Respectfully,

Jared Hautamaki

████████████████████

██