

Good evening esteemed council members, my name is Ricardo Hernandez, assistant principal at Paint Branch HS and a 16 year MCPS employee and recently I was named Maryland State secondary schools Assistant Principal of the year. I come before you today to ask for your support in passing the 10 cent tax to fully support the county executive's budget.

Your support is critical in providing the much needed support to our schools and community. Education and the needs of our students have changed. To do this work—The budget represents an important investment in people. Namely a highly qualified administrator, teacher and support service professional in every position. This is essential to improving academics and providing the services our students and families need.

When I started in 2007, MCPS was the top school system in Maryland, since then it has faltered, in part to the loss of the institutional knowledge that made this system great. To combat this we must have competitive wages in order to recruit and retain quality employees. The competitive nature of today's employment environment requires this. In recent years I have seen too many teachers and administrators leave the system for surrounding jurisdictions for better compensation and quality of life. We once were the county that people wanted to live and work in. That has now changed, with this budget and your full approval we will once again be the county that people want to live and work in.

This community is a decade behind in per pupil funding. Easily 5th in the state and combined with high inflation it means that our schools are currently significantly underfunded. A targeted tax increase is the right thing to do to move our county forward. Our neighbors in Howard, Frederick, Prince Georges, and Fairfax all pay higher taxes.

We are at a critical crossroads, the future of Montgomery County government and the services it provides will be determined by how well we do for our students today. Now is the time to do whatever it takes to do right by our children. Our future and the future of our children depends on it. I ask you to fully fund our school system, and the executives budget –this is the right thing to do —Today.

Doing the right thing is often the hardest thing to do. I ask you to do the right thing and vote for this 10 cent increase to meet the budget needs of the county. While the impact on families of a 10 cent tax increase will be minimal, the impact for students will be significant.

Thank you,

Ricardo Hernandez