

Dear Montgomery County Council,

April 13, 2023

I am shocked to hear that Arcola Elementary's Linkages to Learning Donors/Partners will be losing their Community School Coordinator position. This is valuable program that unites students, parents and outside organizations within the surrounding community.

A successful program should NOT be cut, but instead held up as an example of an outstanding coordination. If anything, it should be expanded to more Title I schools. The work that is part of this busy full-time job will not be successful if it is simply added to another employee's responsibilities.

This will put smart sacks, ballet, healthy cooking, stem, homework club, ESOL, and Girls On the Run in jeopardy. This also includes various yearly holiday giving programs, thanksgiving program, and a coat drive supported by area volunteers.

I am disgusted to hear that there was a rushed opportunity to testify. There was no reasonable notice for the students, teachers, parents and outside organizations to speak on April 11. We found this out two days after the meeting passed. And now, the county council has only allowed one day until April 14 for written testimony submission. This silences and discounts any sincere concern for those of us who live in Wheaton and the many county-wide volunteers who are connected to these programs.

I have lived within the Wheaton Regional Park Neighborhood Association for 30 years. I'm a member of Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church in Bethesda. I participate in holiday gift giving, personal food donations and the coat drive for Arcola Elementary. The school is three blocks from my home. In addition, I have driven smart sacks between Bethesda and Weller School for an entire school year.

Over the last few years, I have led the Arcola Elementary School Coat Drive. Bethesda church members look forward to and treasure the opportunity to participate in the donation of more than 90 coats for the children. This is the largest fundraiser for our congregation. Many of us have a personal connection to the school. These school projects involve long-range planning and many weeks of hard work. Supporting and receiving this kind of community giving brings people together in ways that bridge many gaps for the county. You should not discount this.

We want our Community School Coordinator to remain at Arcola. Anything less will destroy a true connection we have built with the school. I also request that there be an opportunity scheduled for people to testify before the County Council so that Wheaton residents and the volunteers can be represented fairly.

Susie Krasnican