Dear County Council Members,

As a Linkages to Learning ~~Parent~~ _____ (parent, principal, CSL teacher) for x number of years, I have been on the frontlines of seeing how vital our Linkages Community School Coordinator is to the _Wheaton Woods_ school community.

Our Linkages Coordinator implements annual community needs assessments, looking at the unique assets and needs of our school community, working hand-in-hand with the principal (or myself) to support students and families. They do this by creating a unique community school plan and then provide much needed programming and services.

Our Community School Coordinator (CSC) connects with our local businesses, churches, synagogues, universities, non-profits and volunteers, bringing in much needed services at no cost to our families and students. They have built long-standing relationships with these organizations and residents – enabling our school to provide extension classes, ESOL and computer literacy classes for our parents, afterschool activities and summer camp programming. In addition, the parent coffees implemented by the CSC have become support groups for our parents, discussing a variety of topics including how to read the MCPS report card, how to help their children with their homework and further on topics like domestic violence, spotlighting the close relationship built between the CSC and our parents. The CSC has been the glue for these families – knowing that when they walk through that Linkages Suite, the CSC will be there for them.

This is an economic issue as well – in past calculations, we know that the donations, in-kind and pro-bono specialists brought into our school community, specifically by the CSCs, brought in almost half of each County dollar supplied to the larger Initiative.

Further, our Community School Coordinator established a Parent Governance Committees at our school. Linkages recognized that our parents have great strengths and would be vital leaders in our school and community once given the resources and education to do so.

When the Community School Liaison was added to our school, these two individuals came together to work in tandem. How? They recognized that now more families could be served if they pooled their resources. More folks could be covered for weekend backpacks and holiday giving and our school could finally serve additional families that needed assistance.

Our school will no longer be able to provide many of these much-needed programs and services once we lose the Community School Coordinator. At a time when the youth mental health crisis is at an all time high, how can we reduce a vital position as the CSC?

As you consider the County Executive's budget for FY24, I urge you to consider re-instating the Community School Coordinator position as part of the Linkages Initiative.

Dora Escobar