

Testimony Regarding the FY24 Operating Budget  
Datrina Davis

Hello! My name is Datrina Davis and I am submitting my written testimony because I would like to make a request that funding be allocated to mandatory Antiracist and equity training for all staff who work directly with or make decisions concerning students enrolled in the Montgomery County Public School System.

As an MCPS graduate, and now a mother and aunt of students enrolled in MCPS, I've seen how the lack of care, understanding and compassion has affected black and brown students, both academically and socially.

I remember being called combative, aggressive, and accused of "giving attitude" when I would speak out against racism and differential treatment when I was enrolled in the MCPS system and now my children are dealing with the same experiences. My children and their friends have been labeled difficult, disrespectful, problematic, and even ghetto, by some of the staff at their schools, when advocating for fair treatment. They have also received harsher disciplinary actions than their counterparts for the same infractions.

According to the Mid-Atlantic Equity consortium's Antiracist System Audit report, "students, families, and staff of color, reported having a less satisfactory experience with MCPS..." This same report states, "racial disparities can be seen in almost every area of MCPS, including reading levels, participation in higher-level classes, graduation rates, suspension and discipline rates..."

The school district's 2022-25 strategic plan states that 83.1% of all school suspensions for disrespect, disruption and insubordination during the 2021-22 school year were Black and Hispanic students, despite them only making up 55% of the MCPS student population. This not only effects the students' mental health, it also disrupts their education. There are huge racial disparities when it comes to proficiency in math and reading that I'm sure directly correlates with the racial disparities in disciplinary actions.

The mandatory training would be helpful as it would teach staff how to effectively listen to the needs and concerns of students, how to avoid stereotyping students, what responses are appropriate or not, and it would hold them accountable if a situation were to arise.

Too many students have slipped through the cracks, been written off or even dismissed because they were viewed as less than or not as worthy or capable of their counterparts and that has to change. Mandatory Antiracist and equity training would be a step in that direction. Every student deserves to feel safe, seen, heard and supported when they step into their school. They all deserve to receive the same chance at success within the MCPS system.

Thank you for your time.