

BLACK MINISTERS' CONFERENCE
OF
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND



P.O. Box 10911, Rockville,
MD 20849-0911

<https://www.bmcmc.org/>

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2023-2025

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April 11, 2023

The Honorable Evan Glass
Council President
Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

**RE: Additional Funding Support for
The George B. Thomas, Sr. Learning Academy**

Dear Council President Glass and members of the Council:

On behalf of the Black Ministers' Conference of Montgomery County (Conference), we appreciate this opportunity to affirm that education is key to upward mobility, and programs like George B. Thomas, Jr. Learning Academy (GBTLA), the Saturday School, must be supported with additional funding. This historical African American nonprofit should be allowed to recover fully and provide a path for strong learning outcomes and enduring partnerships. The Conference is an alliance of leaders of predominately Black churches that have joined together to promote, support, and advance the interests and upward mobility of the Black Community, especially for programs like the George B. Thomas Learning Academy.

For over 35 years, GBTLA has provided tutoring support to all underrepresented populations in Montgomery County. What started out as a volunteer-led effort from one of the African American fraternities in the County with twenty-one students has become, with County support, a regional and national model for Saturday School programs, and serves thousands of students each year. As we have learned from COVID-19, new efforts must be employed to meet the learning and systemic challenges.

The County Executive supported full funding for MCPS. But the Saturday School allocation was reduced because of fewer students. Several inhibiting factors, such as parents' inability to pay for services, fierce competition for excellent teachers and staff, and effective collaboration with MPCS, could be alleviated with additional funding for the Saturday School. The Conference applauds MCPS and the Saturday School for charting a new course where all students can improve their learning with needed educational and mental health services. Accordingly, we implore the Council to support additional funding for George B. Thomas for the success of our youth in Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Gareth Murray, Sr., President