

**Greetings County Council members. My name is Byron Johns, and I am here before you today on behalf of the NAACP-MC Parents' Council and as co-Founder of the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence, to advocate for the protection and maintenance of investments in literacy and math programs within the MCPS FY 2025 budget.**

**As you are likely aware, the state of Maryland currently ranks an alarming 40th in the nation according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores. This statistic alone should serve as a wake-up call for us to prioritize the improvement of our educational system, particularly in the core areas of literacy and math.**

**Within our own Montgomery County Public Schools, more than half of our Black and Brown students, who make up 54% of the student body, are not meeting proficiency benchmarks in these crucial subjects. This is a grave concern that demands immediate attention and persistent action to remedy it.**

**Over the past few years, MCPS (with your financial support) has made strategic investments in programs and initiatives aimed at improving teaching quality and providing more effective support for struggling students. These investments are beginning to bear fruit, with promising outcomes emerging in the form of more effective teaching and improved student performance.**

**However, progress is “lumpy” and attainment of systemwide goals are years into the future thus we should not become complacent or ponder disinvestment in these critical areas. Doing so would be a disservice to our students, a waste of prior investments, and a step backward in our efforts to provide a high-quality, equitable education for all.**

**Therefore, I urge you, the County Council, to protect and maintain these investments in the FY 2025 budget. By doing so, we can continue to build upon the progress made thus far and ensure that our teachers have the resources and support they need to effectively reach and engage every student, regardless of their background or current academic standing.**

**Furthermore, I call upon the County Council, the Board of Education, employee unions, and all other stakeholders to work in alignment with parents & caregivers, putting aside any differences, and prioritizing the needs of our most underserved Montgomery County students. Together, we must strive to create the most equitable and highest quality educational system our investment can buy.**

**Lastly, I urge us to hold each other accountable — that these investments and the plans for academic improvements are implemented with fidelity, ensuring that every bus stop, lunchroom, and classroom in every school is a nurturing and effective learning environment for all our children.**

**By protecting these investments, working in alignment, and holding ourselves accountable, we can truly make a difference in the lives of our students and secure a brighter future for our community.**

**Thank you for your time and consideration.**