

Good morning,

My name is Ida Gharagozlou-Romero, I am a special education teacher at Sequoyah Elementary. I teach a 1-2 combo learning center. I have been teaching for 18 years in the special education world. I am new to MCPS this year and I have to say it was a shock seeing the difference between special education in Broward County, Florida versus in Montgomery County, Maryland. I wanted to share some of my everyday struggles in the hope that you fully fund the budget proposed by Dr. Taylor.

The importance of funding this budget is immense, probably more than my words can say. I have a lot of students in my classroom that require assistance in almost every aspect of their day. They are often not able to express their wants/needs and feelings. Some of them require one on one aid but with the current funding, there isn't anyone to provide that. They go through their day learning very little because the support they need is not available. MCPS, right now, wastes so much money on private placements. That money could be used to provide more services and support in MCPS classrooms. Fully funding the budget would mean that I can instruct students with the support they need to engage in the lessons. It would mean, engaging with their non-disabled peers in meaningful and enjoyable activities.

We wouldn't have students running the hallways with support staff chasing them, who often need to be in a classrooms teaching. We would not be subjected to physical harm and verbal threats because we simply do not have the time or energy to try to figure out what our students are trying to communicate because we are stressed by the immense workload placed on us every day.

Some days we are at a loss on what to do because we have students destroying our classrooms and terrorizing their peers because they do not have the emotional support they need because of a lack of funding. Many times this year I have asked for extra help and the reply is always the same "there isn't money to hire anyone." By fully funding the budget, this statement could be turned into "let's see if we can interview someone who would be a

good fit”. My mental health has suffered greatly this year. There are many days when I have cried during my breaks and at home because I feel so frustrated by the lack of support/resources in my classroom. I have thought about taking leave many times but always think about the students who need me. I implore you to fully fund this budget, the students and teachers of MCPS deserve better.

Thank you,

Ida Gharagozlou-Romero