

**Testimony before the Montgomery County Council- FY26 Budget- Burnt Mills ES +  
Linkages to Learning**

April 8, 2025

Good Evening Council President Kate Stewart and Councilmembers,

My name is Rachel Herman, and I'm a proud 4th grade teacher at Burnt Mills Elementary School. I'm here today to ask for your support in funding *Linkages to Learning* for our school—because I've seen firsthand how much our students need this.

Every day, I teach bright, curious, resilient kids. But I also see the weight some of them carry—kids who come to school tired because they didn't sleep well in a crowded home... who struggle to focus because they're worried about where their next meal is coming from... who act out not because they're "bad," but because they're hurting and don't have the words to ask for help.

We talk a lot about academic success, but the truth is—learning can't happen when basic needs aren't being met. As educators, we know Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: before a child can focus on reading or math, they need to feel safe, cared for, and emotionally supported.

That's exactly what Linkages to Learning would bring to Burnt Mills—on-site therapists, caseworkers, and mental health services that meet families where they are. It's not just about responding to crises; it's about building long-term stability so our kids can truly thrive.

So today, I'm asking you—please help us give our students what they *need* in order to succeed. Please fund Linkages to Learning at Burnt Mills Elementary. Your support could change the trajectory of a child's life.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration.