

Testimony before the Montgomery County Council- FY26 Budget- EBBE Waters Landing
April 8, 2025

Good evening Council President Kate Stewart and Members of the County Council.

My name is Cherise Callahan, and I am here representing Waters Landing in partnership with Action in Montgomery. I moved here to Germantown, 4 years ago with 3 of my 4 daughters. I came to Germantown during COVID, and in the middle of divorce after 13 years of marriage. So, as you can probably imagine, my children and I needed an environment of support and community, because I still believe that "IT TAKES A VILLAGE". When I first moved to Germantown, I didn't know anyone. All I had here in MD was an aunt and her three children. My first year here I pretty much stayed to myself. No friends, no church home, no neighbors, no community.

After that year, I met Mrs. Moore at Waters Landing, where two of my children attended. She began to connect me to other people, resources and entities. I'm now, a dance mom for the Waters Landing Tides Dance Team, a member of the Together We Thrive women's group, a partner with Action in Montgomery, and most importantly, a passionate parent and advocate for my children.

So, I along with all the parents, grandparents, friends, family, loved ones and supporters want this award-winning Excel Beyond the Bell afterschool program at our school, because this will give our children an opportunity to engage in recreation through the power of play, social interaction and skill building with new friends, an environment that will stimulate learning and provide academic enrichment, nutritional wellness with hot meals, and community connection, which all promotes a pathway to student success.

Waters Landing is here together with East Silver Spring because we have a long-term vision that all children in Title I elementary schools will have access to a high-quality afterschool program.

Today we ask members of the County Council, especially members of the Planning, Housing, and Park, we ask that you support County Executive's recommended \$688,000 to expand Excel beyond the Bell to Waters Landing and East Silver Spring Elementary Schools. Because as I stated earlier, "IT TAKES A VILLAGE", and we need you as a part of our village.

We are a community here in Germantown, and we stand strong together as one, from all walks of life and backgrounds, to advocate for our children, for our future. Stand with us in support of Excel Beyond the Bell at Waters Landing.