

Good Afternoon County Council,

My name is Mrs. Alisha Small and I am a certified personal development coach, consultant, parent and advocate for student success. I'm here today to urge the Board to allocate more funding for quality personal development programs in our public schools. While social and emotional learning (SEL) programs exist, they do not fully meet the evolving needs of today's students. Many current SEL initiatives focus primarily on managing emotions and conflict resolution—which are important, but not enough. Students need deeper, structured personal development programs that provide lifelong skills in self-awareness, resilience, goal-setting, and leadership. Imagine a comprehensive personal development curriculum for grades K-12:

- In elementary school, students would learn self-confidence, problem-solving, and perseverance through interactive storytelling, guided reflection, and growth mindset activities.
- In middle school, they would engage in goal-setting workshops, career exploration, and mentorship programs that teach them how to advocate for themselves and plan for their future.
- In high school, students would receive real-world leadership training,

personal branding education, financial literacy, and resilience coaching to prepare them for success beyond graduation—whether in college, career, or entrepreneurship. Right now, this level of intentional development is missing. Schools may have SEL lessons a few times a month, but they lack consistent, structured programs that help students truly build confidence, discipline, and decision-making skills over time. Many students leave school feeling unprepared—not because they lack academic knowledge, but because they haven’t developed the self-awareness and resilience to navigate real-world challenges. Investing in personal development programs means preparing students for success in life, not just in school.

I know from experience with my own children, that when students build strong personal foundations, academic performance improves, behavioral issues decrease, and their engagement in school and the community increases. The reality is that what’s currently in place is not enough. If we want Montgomery County Public Schools to be a model for student success, we must commit to funding programs that empower students not just academically, but personally. Today, I ask you: What kind of future are we building if we only focus on what students know, but not on who they are becoming? Let’s prioritize the whole child and ensure that every student graduates not just with a diploma, but with the confidence and skills to thrive in life.

Thank you.