

April 8, 2025

Good evening Council President Kate Stewart and members of the County Council. My name is Bonny Dieterich and I am a first grade teacher at Burnt Mills Elementary, a community school dedicated to supporting each student and every family.

Our proud principal, Dr. Ashton, began a recent staff meeting with this quote: “We build bridges and break down barriers.” As educators, this describes the most important work we do, which often extends beyond the school day. This involves making sure families feel valued and supported, and includes finding resources to promote their health and well-being. When a first grader quietly requests an extra breakfast entree so her mom can eat that day or a father shares a fear that his family won’t be able to see a doctor, you don’t have to be a teacher to understand that our school community struggles to access necessities that many of us may take for granted.

At Burnt Mills, our FARMS rate is currently 84%. This number proves that our families would benefit from additional programs that we are not yet able to provide. However, there is a clear solution: the partnership committed to healthy communities known as Linkages to Learning. We know physical and emotional well-being is fundamental to students’ ability to grow and learn. Having a variety of services at our school will eliminate barriers by providing access to essential supports for our families. This will benefit our students now, and set them up for long-term success.

As a community, let’s ensure that our students and their families have the support they need to thrive. Let’s build bridges and break down barriers. Please include funding in this year’s budget for Linkages to Learning at Burnt Mills. Thank you.