

Tuesday April 8, 2025

Adam Myers
Bethesda 20816

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION MCPS BUDGET
PROPOSAL**

TO: Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and members of the County Council
FROM: Adam Myers

My name is Adam Myers, and I am a resident of Bethesda in District I.

I am submitting this testimony to urge the County Council to fully fund the MCPS budget as recommended by the Board of Education so that MCPS is able to maintain funding for restorative justice specialists, with hope that MCPS and the County Council will expand restorative justice in the near future by funding a full-time restorative justice coach at every middle and high school.

I am a 28 year old Jewish man, and my values have long been shaped by living a Jewish life. Jewish culture puts emphasis on the concepts of mitzvahs (good deeds), tikkun olam (repairing the world), tzedakah (justice/righteousness) and t'shuvah (redemption), values that my recent attendance at Adat Shalom Reconstructionist synagogue have emphasized even more so as part of my Jewish heritage.

Even before I understood those terms, I believed in them.

In high school when I was in a mental health crisis, the school called the police to stop me from harming myself. In the ensuing moments, my clothes were ripped and I was tased. At a younger age in a similar event the police put me in handcuffs. These events impacted me irreversibly.

Police are not prepared to handle anyone in a crisis, and mental health struggles due to unmet needs can be registered by police as a potential threat when officers are primed to see the behaviors of students—especially black and brown students as well as disabled students like myself—as problematic and disruptive rather than recognizing that they are in need of support from trusted adults. As a result, these students are disproportionately disciplined through punitive and sometimes even violent measures, with non-white students far more at risk of being perceived as a threat that must be dealt with violently (though as noted it's not limited to them.)

If police can't handle something as serious as a mental health crisis without approaching an actual child as a threat, what reason does anyone—student or otherwise—have to trust that they can manage the everyday challenges and interpersonal conflicts of students without causing unnecessary distress and tension?

Students—and once again, especially black and brown students—are put in a position where they must constantly monitor themselves to make sure they don't do anything that could make an officer even slightly uncomfortable, or be perceived as obstructing the officer's duties. Creating environments where children are afraid does nothing long term to improve the safety of students in MCPS.

Young people in Montgomery County must have pathways to success after making mistakes and when they are most in need of support. With my history as laid out above –plus my general struggles as a disabled student over the years– I am very passionate about students getting the support they need, when they need it, instead of getting punished for it. More police, punishment and surveillance will only heighten fear and anxiety among students, which is proven to result in more acting out, not less. Accountability and punishment are not synonyms, and it's time that our approach to creating a safe society reflected that and stopped traumatizing people—and especially youth—when they are most in need of help and support.

I once again urge the County Council to fully fund the Board of Education's MCPS FY26 proposed budget and recognize the need for the Montgomery County budget to incorporate the vital benefits of Restorative Justice approaches to safety and put guarantees for RJ efforts in the budget, not just in schools but across the board so that the County can prevent unnecessary harm to students and residents.

Failing to do so creates immense concerns for the community and endangers vital progress made that has improved the safety of Montgomery County for county residents and their children.