

To the Montgomery County Council,

As I cannot attend the budget hearings due to other obligations, I submit the following remarks into the record as part of the ongoing conversation around Montgomery County Public Schools Operating Budget for FY 2026.

First, I would like to thank the Superintendent, Board of Education, and the County Council for addressing the concerns raised previously about compensation equity for paraeducators. As a paraeducator at JWMS with a bachelor's degree and classified at Grade 13 through career ladder coursework, my responsibilities align with—and often go beyond—those for higher-grade positions, such as: **Paraeducator Level II positions under the 504 (Grade 15-16)and Special Educator (Grade 15-16) framework.**

On a typical day most of our MCPS paraeducators responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Supporting students across all subject areas with a broad range of academic content.
- Implementing and monitoring IEP/504 accommodations.
- Providing academic, behavioral, and emotional support.
- Collaborating closely with teachers, administrators, and families.

In lieu of these responsibilities, the current compensation for a paraeducator at Grade 13 does not reflect the complexity of the work they do. It certainly does not meet the cost of living in our community. This creates financial strain for many paraeducators despite performing the duties of higher-grade roles.

And, while I kindly urge the compensation committee to:

1. Review paraeducator duties against current pay grades.
2. Adjust salaries to better reflect job requirements.
3. Acknowledge and address the undervaluation of paraeducators' vital role.

I hope that you, the members of the Montgomery County Council, will ensure full funding for MCPS so that they can address these shortcomings in our employment experience as paraeducators and carry out our much needed reclassification.

Please accept these remarks as my formal testimony and contribution to the ongoing discussion. I am proudly showing my support for this cause and voicing the need for change. Educators deserve fair wages that match their professional contributions, and I look forward to further dialogue on this matter.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Qing Cheng". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paraeducator

Montgomery County Public Schools