



COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Testimony before the Montgomery County Board of Education on the
Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget for FY15
January 16, 2014

Good evening. My name is Zack Khan and I am a sophomore at Richard Montgomery High School. I am here tonight representing the Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Superintendent's Recommended Operating Budget for FY15.

We were encouraged to see several elements in the budget that support our mission and priorities, which include:

- Preparing all students for successful futures
- Increasing social and emotional support for students in schools
- Increasing access to quality out-of-school time opportunities

Preparing Students for Successful Futures

The Commission supports funding for the seamless integration of technology. Along with this there needs to be attention on the smart use of social media. We applaud the efforts of the superintendent to call attention to social media and the need for parents and guardians to learn more about this topic and talk with their children to allow for child safety.

Technology should enhance student learning. We encourage MCPS to identify best practices for use of technology, train teachers to effectively integrate technology and determine how technology will advance closing the achievement gap.

We also encourage the provision of multiple pathways to prepare students who have not been successful in traditional programs. We support the increased funding allotted for alternative programs, project-based learning, and intervention schools.

Increasing Social and Emotional Supports for Students in Schools

The addition of pupil personnel worker (PPW), counselor, and psychologist positions is a commendable step toward increasing student access to social emotional supports. The Commission has advocated for these and other student supports over the past several years and we reiterate our position that this area is a top priority; particularly at the middle and high school levels.

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Over the past seven years, the Commission has learned from its *Youth Having A Voice Roundtables* that teens today face many stressors ranging from intensive needs to the struggles related to daily school and family life. Youth have consistently reported that school counselors are not generally perceived as a resource for social emotional support. Most often high school students see counselors as having significant administrative duties, such as class scheduling. We support increasing these positions and making students aware that counselors are available to provide mental health counseling and support and referrals to community agencies. In addition, we request that the Board of Education promote an aggressive outreach program to middle and high school students to increase their awareness of the role of counselors. We urge you to develop school-wide initiatives to connect adolescents and teens with their counseling staff and forge better connections between teachers and counselors to utilize the resources available within and external to schools.

Increasing Access to Quality Out-of-School Time Opportunities

The recommended increase in funding for transportation for students participating in Excel Beyond the Bell is welcomed. The Commission recently completed a survey to document the needs of out-of-school time programs/providers in Montgomery County. Although we are in the preliminary phase of data analysis, lack of transportation, along with the need for space, appears to be a barrier in the county.

We also appreciate the increased funding for minority achievement programs that allows schools to provide a variety of extracurricular programs that support improving achievement for minority students. We encourage all of County government to work to reverse the unfortunate educational and incarceration trends of young men of color and initiatives such as this can contribute to better outcomes.

Finally, the Commission recommends exploring innovative partnerships between MCPS and public-private organizations to support existing and create new afterschool opportunities for children throughout the County. We strongly encourage the Board of Education to enhance its collaborations with other County agencies. As you are aware, Montgomery County Recreation, Public Libraries, and non-profit youth-serving programs, which are essential to serving the whole child, are slowly recovering from devastating reductions. Innovative public-private partnerships are critical when working towards meeting the needs of the community and providing direct services to students.

Conclusion

In the event that the Board of Education does not receive its full budget request, we ask that you continue to prioritize the whole child as part of your efforts to promote student success and achievement. We urge you not to make reductions on initiatives that prepare all students for successful futures, increase social and

emotional support for students, and increase access to quality out-of-school time opportunities.

Like you, the Montgomery County Commission on Children and Youth believes that a budget reflects the values of our community. We appreciate the superintendent's emphasis on the enrichment of the whole child as well as academic success and we are proud of the County's commitment to education and the outstanding resources available here.

