



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

CRAIG RICE
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT 2

Statement for Councilmember Craig Rice on FY19 Budget

I unfortunately find myself in a very difficult and torn position, frustrated about the fact that I encountered what I feel was a flawed budget process, something that I've never seen in my 8 year tenure here on the Council. Something that encompassed disrespecting my committee's hard work and well researched and coordinated recommendations for what seems is the gain of a tagline in an election year.

As Chair of the Education Committee, I truly appreciate the County Executive's support of Montgomery County Public Schools and fully funding their budget. And I also appreciate my Council colleagues' support to invest in our future by investing in our schools.

And while I celebrate the success of everything in this budget related to MCPS, conversely, I am dismayed at the fact that Montgomery College's budget was severely cut which could mean even greater increases in tuition than originally proposed, reductions to strategic programs designed to reduce the achievement gap and eliminate disparities, or reductions in staff pay. And none of these things will help us to address workforce disparities that our community college has been partners with us on fixing for many years.

Our Montgomery College is the largest community college in the state and second largest post-secondary institution after the University of Maryland. The county funds 60% of Montgomery College's budget and we always get tremendous return on that investment. Their collaboration with MCPS through the Early College dual enrollment program allows juniors and seniors to earn an associate degree while completing their high school requirements. The ACES program provides a seamless pathway for high school students to transition to Montgomery College and provides them resources to succeed.

The college, through the insightful leadership of Dr. DeRionne Pollard, continues to create student gateways to success, in addressing the achievement gap, particularly among black and latino males, and providing career tech opportunities such as IT, Construction and Homeland Security. Their budget also asked for needed library

enhancements, so students have a place conducive to studying. Montgomery College for many is a destination of choice because they know they can get a world class education at an affordable cost. To think this budget places this mission at risk is unconscionable.

And while our budget of over \$5.6 billion may be more than one particular entity, the way this process went with the College and the way the Council President handled it, forced me to say I initially would not vote for it.

By prioritizing resources and fully funding Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), we send a strong message that Montgomery County values MCPS and the crucial part education plays in everything we do. Our schools are not the stereotypical K-12 institutions in which teaching and testing are done. Our kids' educational, social/emotional wellbeing, and basic needs are provided within those four walls. I have had the pleasure of working with Superintendent Jack Smith over the past two years, and his vision and mission to enhance our school system to ensure success for all students is one I whole-heartedly support. Dr. Smith's mantra of "all means all" is at the heart of everything he does, and through the addition of support personnel, supplemental resources and programming for our kids' pre-k to job, our schools have given them the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

One of my initiatives, based on my work on the Kirwan Commission, was the continued funding for MCPS to expand Pre-K and broaden Head Start from half-day to full-day, giving our beginning learners the best opportunity possible to start kindergarten prepared to succeed. Other program enhancements include expansion of dual language immersion programs in our elementary schools, adding new career pathways for our high school students in areas of cybersecurity, law enforcement and aviation, and expanding ACES to additional high schools.

A critical component when it comes to safety and security in our schools is our School Resource Officers (SROs). SROs have a unique understanding of school security and how building relationships with students is crucial to mitigating and preventing incidents within our schools. Having one SRO in each high school is an important complement to MCPS' safety and security protocols, but it is not enough. It's time to ensure our middle schools are afforded the same attention as their needs are just as great as our high schools. This is why I strongly advocated for funding for an additional ten SROs to be placed in our middle schools. While the council was unable to fund all ten positions this year, I am very pleased that we were able to accommodate an additional three SROs for our middle schools in the coming school year.

Four years ago, I served as Council President, in an election year, leading us through an equally difficult time where we had to find creative ways to ensure our priorities were met. And I did it in a way that brought my colleagues and stakeholders together collaboratively, inviting their thoughts and feedback, never dictating to them how we would come to consensus. But this year I am remiss that this was not the case.

So while I am proud that this year's budget again highlights K-12 education as a priority in our county, it does not do the same for our community college. But with so many priorities of mine that are addressed in this budget, I cannot turn a blind eye to them and not support the overall budget.

I fought hard to be in this seat to make sure that I was doing good things in our community and prioritizing issues that I knew were important to our constituents. And I strongly feel that our budget should reflect those same priorities.

I want to thank Montgomery College and Montgomery County Public Schools for your ongoing partnership and look forward to working with you in the future.