



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

WILL JAWANDO
COUNCILMEMBER, AT-LARGE
CHAIR, EDUCATION & CULTURE COMMITTEE
PLANNING, HOUSING, AND PARKS COMMITTEE

February 23, 2024

Re: Support for House Bill 919

Dear Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I am writing to share my support for House Bill 919 sponsored by Delegate Fair. This bill would allow county governments, including Montgomery County, to set special property tax rates, thereby strengthening the County's capacity to fund public education and transportation. As you will recall, I have submitted testimony in support of other legislation to allow counties increased flexibility to set taxes, as I believe this would empower counties to respond more effectively to the specific needs of their jurisdictions. I am grateful for the opportunity to express my support for this bill to the committee.

As an At-Large County Councilmember in Montgomery County, this bill represents an opportunity for counties to better meet the needs of our community. This bill, like similar legislation, is particularly important to me as Chair of the Montgomery County Council Education & Culture Committee. As you know, Montgomery County has the largest school district in Maryland and the 15th largest school system in the country. Today, MCPS has more than 160,000 students and 25,000 employees across our 211 elementary, middle, and high schools. Our school system is over 75% students of color, nearly half of whom qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch (FARMS), making meeting the needs of our diverse school system a top priority. This bill would provide an important source of additional revenue for that purpose.

As you know, while funding our public school system has always been critical, the needs of our school systems are increasingly complex. Our teachers, staff, and principals are called on to address many more social and emotional challenges, and more hunger and poverty, while also facilitating the education and student learning that is the centerpiece of our public school system. All of these challenges mean that our schools will continue to require increasing levels of funding.

I am grateful to Delegate Fair for introducing this bill. I appreciate the committee's thoughtful consideration of the bill and urge a favorable report on HB919.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Will Jawando".

WILL JAWANDO