

Good afternoon esteemed legislators, staff, and viewers. My name is Jennifer Martin, and it is my honor to serve as President of the Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA). As President of MCEA, I represent over 14,000 educators that are struggling with the daily challenges at our schools. I come to you today in support of House Bill 598, which is a strong step in the right direction to better fund our schools.

When I took office in July of 2021, we were smack dab in the middle of a global pandemic, an economic crisis, and a mass exodus from the education profession. Here we are -- a quarter of the way through 2023 -- still struggling to overcome some of these problems. Thankfully, this bill would help bring much-needed resources by fundamentally changing the way we calculate per-pupil funding across our great state.

At Montgomery County Public Schools, as with many jurisdictions in other counties, our enrollment continues to grow each year. However, how we currently calculate per-pupil funding leaves millions of dollars on the table that could be best spent to help our children succeed, provide better compensation and support for our educators, and fund equitable solutions to our most vulnerable communities. This new formula provides a more dynamic and accurate way to reflect

enrollment change and can better adjust to a sudden increase or decrease in the student population. This is especially important in a County like Montgomery, whose per-pupil funding is near the bottom of the counties in the state.

Every day our members spend countless hours giving their very best to our students so they will be on track for academic and personal success this school year and in their futures. We do all this because we truly love our public schools and the work we do. We stand with our students and their parents, who simply want a better future for their children.

We are continuously proud of our elected officials' words of support for our public schools, but we must do more to ensure our schools are fully funded and meet the needs of all. As students of color have become the majority in our schools, as the proportion of students needing special education services and English Language support has grown, and as the number of children in poverty has increased, real per-pupil spending in Montgomery County has declined. This is simply shameful.

It's time for us all, elected leaders, community members, and educators, to say: "We love our Public Schools" -- and then prove it by supporting creative solutions like this bill which will help bring the

necessary funding to meet the needs of the students we serve. Join us and do what is right. Our students' future and the future prosperity of Maryland are at stake. Thank you for your time and solidarity.