

- **Reduced expertise and support at a time of growth.** FY2027 budget cuts would drastically reduce autism expertise and support across MCPS by cutting leadership and specialized psychologists and shrinking staffing from approximately 19 to ~10.4 FTE—even as the autistic student population and the number of “classic autism” programs are projected to grow (with an estimated 10–13 additional elementary classes).
- **No clear replacement plan or accountable leadership.** MCPS has not provided a clear plan for what will replace the Autism Unit’s structure, oversight, and accountable leadership. MCPS has not communicated who will oversee autism services; ensure IDEA-required, evidence-based interventions are implemented equitably districtwide; stay current on best practices; or provide essential supports such as expertise at IEP meetings, consultation for educators, staff training, and coordinated, hands-on school support.
- **A major transparency and access gap for families and staff.** Despite MCPS’s professed commitment to transparency, the community was not informed for weeks about major eliminations that impact autism services (and other key positions affecting special education more broadly). Parents do not know what services and programs will continue, what staffing changes will occur, or who to contact for support that has historically come through the Autism Unit. While MCPS has rolled out cross-functional teams in the past year, they are not functioning at a uniform, cohesive, and consistent level across the school system. Families have reported uneven results and inconsistent guidance—particularly when team members have varying experience levels in special education and may not have developed specific expertise to deliver consistent support.