



## Council Presidents Message

This year, in the Fiscal Year 2019 Operating Budget and the Fiscal Years 2019-24 Capital Improvements Program, the Council balanced the County's fiscal realities with our shared values while building on the services that our residents rely on. Our budget holds the line on property taxes and continues the tradition of fiscal responsibility that has allowed us to maintain the County's AAA bond rating that is the hallmark of well-run governments.

One of our County's highest priorities is education. This year we funded 100 percent of our school system's \$2.59 billion operating budget request to continue making progress in reducing class size and closing the achievement gap. We also included \$1.8 billion over the next six years for the school system's capital budget. These actions demonstrate our commitment to addressing the critical needs of our growing school system.

The Council continued its commitment to funding early childhood education and pre-K. The combined total for Head Start and pre-K programs in the Department of Health and Human Services and Montgomery County Public Schools is \$76 million, including a \$3.5 million expansion to convert part-day pre-k to full day. The Council also added funds to expand after school programs aimed at serving vulnerable populations and narrowing the achievement gap.

The Council's budget also reflects the importance of Montgomery College, which currently supports more than 58,000 students, with funding of \$316 million.

The Council continued to prioritize funding for public safety. We restored nearly \$6.7 million in proposed service reductions to the Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that response times for residents during emergencies are kept to a minimum. We also added funding for three additional school resource officers in our schools to help keep our students safe in the classroom.

We also took steps to strengthen our economy. The operating budget funds more than \$5 million to support the work of the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation. The Council also funded more than \$3.5 million for the County's incubator programs, including new funding for BioHealth Innovation to continue growing our booming biotech and health sectors, and created the Small Business Innovation Research Matching Program.

This year's budget also provides \$63.8 million for the Housing Initiative Fund, which includes funding for both operating and capital needs to create and preserve affordable housing in our County. We also funded improvements to transit service on our busiest corridors, new bicycle and pedestrian safety measures and new buses for Bus Rapid Transit.

I want to thank my Council colleagues and the Council staff for their hard work. Thank you also to the County Executive and his staff, and to the governing boards and staff of M-NCPPC, WSSC, MCPS and Montgomery College. Together we have produced a budget that is fiscally responsible, reflects the County's values and strengthens core government services that make our County an extraordinary place to live, work and raise a family.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hans".

Hans Riemer  
President, Montgomery County Council

