

**County Council FY 2013 Budget Public Hearing Testimony  
Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board**

**April 10, 2012**

Good evening Council President Berliner and Councilmembers,

My name is Juan Cardenas, and as Chair of the Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board, I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the FY 13 operating budget on behalf of the 300,000 upcounty citizens.

It is our belief that the Executive and Council have taken on the task of guiding us through the tough economy and should be commended for choosing a long-range view to address the imbalance of revenues and expenses. We also firmly believe that we are not out of the woods yet. There is growth in the economy but worry about rising fuel and food costs. The budget passed last night in Annapolis presents a challenge. Given these concerns, a path of modest improvements, efforts to find cost savings, and reducing the capital budget and impact of the debt service, is advised.

With lively input and discussion from our friends, neighbors, and citizens, we endorse the plan presented by the County Executive. I would like to highlight the priorities and themes which we believe will help us continue to maintain our county as the best place to live.

Public Safety—we have a great deal of praise for Chief Manger and the exceptional men and women who make up our police force. In spite of economic challenges, they have found a way to decrease crime in the county. We must do our part to continue to target hot spots by providing additional patrol officers and investigators. Along the same lines, Chief Bowers needs additional fire and rescue resources to fill posts and reduce overtime.

Schools—both MCPS and Montgomery College have done their part to get us through a difficult time. Fully funding requests is not throwing away money—but we do ask that you work closely with both agencies to help uncover accountability processes already in place and find new ones if needed.

It is not on the Executive's list but we believe the Regional Services Centers need consideration. Staffing at the Upcounty Center has gone from 7 to 6 to 3 and now one. That one person has central administrative support but no "boots on the ground." Residents continue to seek assistance for all kinds of matters and just the addition of one more full-time position would greatly help.

Recognizing our dedicated employees—for three years, our county government and school employees have shouldered the brunt of reductions by forgoing raises. We need to find a meaningful, yet responsible way to show our gratitude for their dedication and service.

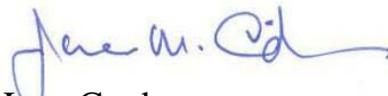
Items that also deserve full funding—libraries, positive youth development, and vital living for seniors.

Paying for these items requires revenue. We expect a comparable tax rate with our neighboring jurisdictions. As mentioned at the beginning, our citizens ask for: continued costs savings, including long-term strategies for pension sustainability; consolidation of services where effective; better accountability through CountyStat and information from schools; and exploring innovative methods of providing services.

Yours is not an easy job. We will do our part to help.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Juan A. Cardenas", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Juan Cardenas  
Chair