Testimony before the Montgomery County Council
Council Bill 17-12
By Dr. DeRionne Pollard
May 8, 2012

Good evening. My name is DeRionne Pollard.

Thank you for your steadfast support of affordable, quality higher education for Montgomery County residents.

I appreciate the continued fiscal challenges facing our community and the enormity of your workload. That includes prioritizing programs, determining revenue sources, and making difficult budget decisions.

As you know, Montgomery College worked hard to live within our means again this year. We submitted an FY13 budget request that seeks no new county funds. How did we do this?

We changed employee health benefits, which includes a $3,000 deductible for family coverage in our new benefit plan. We asked our employees to forego a pay increase again next year. And we asked our students to pay more in tuition, despite the diminishing buying power of the Pell grant and significant increases in financial aid requests. Student tuition and fees now account for 40% of our operating budget. This trend cannot continue. Four thousand students did not enroll at Montgomery College this past fall after qualifying for but failing to receive a scholarship or grant.

Together, we can ensure the next great generation is prepared to lead our community, contribute to our economy, and ensure the magic of Montgomery County continues. To do so, we must remain committed to a quality, affordable post-secondary education. A high school diploma alone is not enough to participate in the 21st century workforce. Post-secondary education is a necessity in today's workforce. It's time to think about a new education paradigm of at least P-14.

I remain committed to rigorous examination of all College expenditures. Yet to be the community college that Montgomery County needs, we will need to enhance the number of full time faculty, we will need to engage in intrusive advising, and we will need to provide our committed faculty and staff with true salary enhancements.

That is why I feel compelled to ask you to give serious consideration to revenue enhancements. I am not just worried about FY13 but also the years ahead. Access and success will be greatly compromised if we do not make some investments in key student areas and in our faculty and staff. I ask you to find the resources necessary to invest in the future of our community—one that includes the full the array of public services necessary to create an engaged citizenry and the workforce of tomorrow. Thank you.