



## MID COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

September 28, 2023

The Honorable County Executive Marc Elrich  
Montgomery County Office of County Executive  
101 Monroe Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Elrich,

The Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) welcomes the opportunity to provide our comments and advice regarding the FY 2025 Budget that directly bears on the Mid-County area, as you work on the budget approval process. We recognize and appreciate the investments made in the Mid-County region in FY 24 and fully appreciate that the County funding in FY 25 will not be sufficient to fund all the requests. That said, we do want to express our support for targeted funding in support of targeted funding, where possible, of the following concerns of particular interest in the Mid-County.

- **HIGHEST PRIORITY 1: Climate Change Infrastructure Transformation and Readiness** – the MCCAB strongly supports County Executive Elrich’s forward-looking investments to address growing climate change impacts to Montgomery County residents and infrastructure-to include immediate and near-term climate risk reduction as well as long-term transformational adaptation. Especially considering Summer 2023’s record high temperatures, damaging storms, and the risks to lives and livelihoods posed by increasing incidences of extreme precipitation amounts and rates during these storms we do ask that continued emphasis be given to the following specific projects.
  - **CRITICAL: Improving Stormwater Management** – the MCCAB supports the commitment in the FY 23 budget to develop a comprehensive Stormwater Management plan. Given the anticipated increase in severe weather over the next several decades the MCCAB strongly recommends that funding be made available to not just complete this plan but to also begin the work of implementing the projects needed to build the resiliency and adaptation measures necessary to mitigate climate-change impacts, protect the County’s most vulnerable residents and infrastructure, and promote continued economic growth.
  - **URGENTLY NEEDED: Enhancing our Solar Infrastructure** – MCCAB recognizes and fully supports County Executive Elrich’s commitment to net zero in his 2023 Capital Budget. We support increased investment in solar infrastructure, including the installation of solar panels and battery systems on County buildings, as effective force multipliers that will facilitate this transition, implementable now, while delivering cost savings in future years. In addition, this is an opportunity to support DEP in developing policies and

regulations for on-site electric generation and improved grid-management to support higher utility loads.

- **Promoting Low Carbon Commuting** – We support additional investment in preparing Montgomery County for the electric commuting revolution by increased investment for deployment of a pragmatic, effective, well-distributed, and scalable network of electric vehicle charging stations as well as establishing and promoting safe ebicycle/bicycle and electric scooter parking near businesses and mass transportation hubs. To be effective this must include the expedited implementation of “first mile, last mile” commuting architecture from homes to businesses, rather than simply completion of discontinuous segments.
- **Improvements to the Georgia Avenue corridor** – The MCCAB thanks the Council for funding the expansion of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) to the Viers Mill Corridor and would now like to see the County move forward with a BRT plan that would enhance mass transit access to residents of Aspen Hill and Olney. The MCCAB also recommends that, as part of this effort, the County invest in improved transit options for residents of Sandy Springs, an area that is currently underserved by transit. We also recommend that the county enhance the promotion of these transit services through additional public outreach.
- **HIGHEST PRIORITY 2: Police, Fire, and Emergency Services** - MCCAB recommends that the County continue to invest the resources needed to ensure that our Police, Fire, and Emergency Services salaries remain competitive in a tight job market and to ensure that the County can continue to meet with rising demand. The MCCAB would like to recognize the recent investment in the County’s Police, Fire, and Emergency Services departments to better permit them to compete for the talent and staffing.
- **HIGHEST PRIORITY 3: Vision Zero** – According to the National Highway Transportation Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the United States in 2021. According to a Transportation Health study published on the NIH National Library of Medicine website the distracted driving crisis has only worsened. County bicyclists embarking on a ride for commuting, health, or fitness soberly realize there is a chance they will be struck from behind by a distracted motorist reading or streaming their mobile phone. There are 2,823 injury crashes in Montgomery County each year from distracted driving and five fatal crashes in Montgomery County each year from distracted driving (189 across all Maryland).<sup>1</sup> Yet, observation indicates that distracted driving ordinances are not being amply enforced in the County. In part for this reason, distracted driving is now one of the three most common contributing factors to fatal car crashes along with speeding and driving impairment.<sup>2</sup> MCCAB therefore strongly supports the County’s Vision Zero plan and recommends that sufficient funds be allocated for County-wide enforcement.
- **HIGHEST PRIORITY 4: Continue Funding Support for Identity, the Welcome Back Center, and the Latino Health Initiative** –Identity, Inc. helps the community to handle emotions by providing accessible, culturally sensitive mental health counseling and case management to youth and families—this is important for the family, children, and community. We ask that the County proactively help this program to assist the thousands of students and disconnected youth and their families living in high poverty areas of the County. Additionally, we request that the County

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-PedSafety/HUPD/Stats/#:~:text=Montgomery%20County%20numbers%3A,driving%20\(25%2C672%20across%20all%20Maryland\)](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DOT-PedSafety/HUPD/Stats/#:~:text=Montgomery%20County%20numbers%3A,driving%20(25%2C672%20across%20all%20Maryland))

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mymcmedia.org/fatal-car-crash-report-card-for-montgomery-county/>

continue allowing participation in the Latino Health Initiative program in the Wheaton High School by supporting this program's growth and giving the opportunity to young students to have a voice and be heard. We further support the Welcome Back Center in their assistance of internationally trained health professionals seeking to integrate back into the health workforce and provide culturally and linguistically competent care to the diverse populations in our region.

- **HIGHEST PRIORITY 5: Community Health** – The County's relative success in managing recent surges in Respiratory Syncytial Virus and MPX cases showcases the benefit of recent investments in the County's Health and Human Services. Given the ongoing risks posed by pandemics, MCCAB strongly supports continued investment in this area, with a special emphasis on improving access to historically underserved communities and the expansion of mental health services.
- **ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES**
  - **Support for Olney Town Center** – the MCCAB continues to support funding for the two specific, interrelated planning studies called for in the 2005 Olney Master Plan to address the development of a town commons and civic center.
    - A Stage Two Olney Town Commons Planning Report, to develop an implementation strategy for the site selection, design, and construction of a town commons/public green space area in the Olney Town Center.
    - An initial Olney Civic Center Planning Report to evaluate the programming needs and project/site requirements for an indoor facility that is needed to provide the growing community of Olney with a centralized campus for public meetings, teen and senior activities, and arts and recreation.
  - **Affordable and mid-range housing** – MCCAB is very pleased to see the County's affordable housing efforts recognized in a recent NY Times article. We strongly support County efforts to develop a wide range of solutions to the affordable housing crisis, whilst seeking to preserve and support the small businesses and other local amenities that contribute to creating the many unique communities that make up Mid-County.
  - **Continued Support for the Wheaton Urban District** – The MCCAB thanks the County for recent investments in the Marian Fryer Town Plaza and continues to support full funding for the Wheaton Urban District, regardless of the revenue generated from parking fees. We also continue to support the Marian Fryer Town Plaza in the Wheaton CBD and expect to see funding for appropriate staffing and programming at the site.

The Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board thanks you for considering our comments and suggestions as you go through the process that will result in the approval of the FY24 Budgets.

Sincerely,

*Arquilla Ridgell*

Arquilla Ridgell  
Chair, Mid County Citizens Advisory Board

cc: Luisa Cardona, Director Mid County Regional Services Center  
County Councilmember Gabe Albornoz

County Councilmember Marilyn Balcombe  
County Councilmember Natali Fani-Gonzalez  
County Councilmember Andrew Friedson  
County Councilmember Will Jawando  
County Councilmember Sidney Katz  
County Councilmember Dawn Luedtke  
County Councilmember Kristin Mink  
County Councilmember Laurie-Anne Sayles  
County Councilmember Kate Stewart