



Dear Resident,

Last week my colleagues at the Montgomery County Council and I heard testimony from more than 150 residents over the course of five **public hearings on the County's Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget**. We heard from students as young as twelve and members of our elder community in their eighties and nineties. We heard from individuals, leaders and spokespeople of nonprofits, businesses and community organizations, and the heads of County agencies and departments. I think I speak for the entire Council when I say I was thrilled to see such an impassioned and engaged community. We heard about perennially important issues such as funding our schools, increasing affordable housing, protecting the environment, supporting and providing services to our elder community, meeting the needs of our autism community and working to reduce the opportunity gap for people of color. We also heard about extremely timely issues such as providing legal assistance to asylum seekers and empowering nonprofits that allow immigrants to start businesses and pursue their dreams.

### **Youth Community Conversation on Racial Equity and Social Justice**

Last Monday I joined Student Member of the Board of Education Ananya Tadikonda and over 70 students from Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) for a youth-led community conversation on racial equity and social justice. The voices of our students and young people will be of critical importance as we develop our County's [Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy](#). You can read a Bethesda Magazine piece about the event [here](#).

### **Supporting New Immigrant Families and Children Fleeing Violence**

At a joint Friday meeting of the Health and Human Services and Education and Culture Committees, my fellow Councilmembers and I received an update on unaccompanied minors and new immigrant families from representatives of MCPS, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, and other organizations and members of the faith community. In 2019 MCPS has 116 children who came to the country as unaccompanied minors fleeing violence and instability in their home countries. The County also anticipates an increase in the number of new immigrant families in the coming months. Our discussion focused on how the County, the schools and our nonprofit partners can increase

services to these vulnerable populations and avoid having our existing resources overextended. The Council staff report can be viewed [here](#).

### **Hotel Ribbon Cutting**

Last week was a busy week! I also attended the ribbon cutting for the new Home2Suites by Hilton in the Hillandale Gateway. This new hotel is one of only six LEED Platinum-certified hotel buildings in North America. I am incredibly thrilled that it was built in the East County – it is a sign of the area’s continued revitalization. Kudos to the Duffie Companies for making this project a reality and to all the advocates of development in East County for supporting this project.

### **Budget Committee Work**

This week, the Council takes a short recess from reviewing the County’s Fiscal Year 2020 Operating Budget, which enables our analysts to carefully analyze budget proposals and make recommendations to the Council’s various Committees. On April 22, Committee review of the budget will begin again. You can see what’s ahead by viewing the full [Committee agenda](#).

Finally, last week I made [remarks](#) at the Council meeting on the passing of Maryland House of Delegates Speaker Michael Busch. His tireless work on behalf of Maryland residents and ability to build consensus on important legislation will be sorely missed.

Thank you, and I hope you have a wonderful week.