

Testimony of Madison Oswald
Representative of Montgomery College Takoma Park/Silver Spring Students
Montgomery County Council

April 8, 2021

Good evening members of the Montgomery County Council. It is a true honor to be speaking with you tonight.

My name is Madison Oswald, and I am a first-generation college student at Montgomery College's Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus. I am here to ask you to support full funding of MC's operating budget request, which will keep tuition flat and affordable for students.

I am heavily involved in MC student life because I want to give back to a school that has given me so much. I am the vice president of the Student Senate and involved in many other clubs and boards. I hold a 4.0 GPA. I began my college education at MC in the fall of 2020, and will graduate in May 2021 after completing my degree in only nine months. I hope to transfer to Georgetown University to earn a bachelor's degree, then a law degree and a Ph.D. in government. I plan to work as a human rights attorney and, ultimately, a United States Senator.

I was raised by a single, teenage mother. When I was fourteen, she married my stepfather and we quickly discovered his drug addiction. My mother and I suffered under abuse—and we lost everything. When my stepfather passed away during my senior year of high school, he left us with \$200,000 of debt. When it was time for me to go to college, we could not get approved for loans or much federal financial aid. Fortunately, with scholarships, I was able to enroll at MC. Affordable tuition made all the difference for me, as it does for many MC students.

And affordable tuition remains critical, especially today. The pandemic has had a drastic effect on the financial security of our students. Some students have lost their jobs and struggle to

pay their bills or purchase the bare necessities—all while parenting their children and trying to get to virtual classes. Many are suffering mental health issues due to the struggles of online learning, social isolation, and, in some cases, an unsafe home environment. Today, I speak to you as a representative and advocate for MC students. Money should not define one's ability to receive an education. I urge you to please support MC's operating budget request, for students like me—students born to be the cycle breakers, students suffering in light of the current conditions, and students who haven't had the opportunities others have had. We, too, deserve access to an affordable education.

Thank you for your continued support of Montgomery College. This college quickly became my home. If tuition remains affordable, it may become the home to many more students.