



Budget 22

Montgomery County Council Testimony on the Fiscal Year 22 Operating Budget Rebuilding Together Montgomery County Maury Peterson, Executive Director

Good evening. I am Maury Peterson, Executive Director of Rebuilding Together Montgomery County. As you may know, RTMC's mission is to provide free critical home repairs and accessibility modifications to the county's most vulnerable homeowners, including seniors, veterans, people with disabilities and struggling families with children. This year we are celebrating our 30th Anniversary and to date we helped 2,500 low-income homeowners and galvanized 50,000 community volunteers in our "neighbor-helping-neighbor" approach.

I joined Rebuilding Together last June during the height of the pandemic. I know from studying your legislative and budget history that this Council is comprised of strong and aggressive leaders in advancing affordable housing.

In particular, I am here to thank you for your long-term financial support of Rebuilding Together Montgomery County. As you may know, our organization is the premiere local nonprofit 100% devoted to the preservation of existing affordable housing. We do not construct new homes but instead help the average, rarely recognized, low-income homeowner who is in desperate need of critical repairs to allow them to remain safe and healthy at home and to stay in the community. Recently, we helped a county resident who has lived in her home for the past 48 years without an indoor toilet or shower. It's hard to believe that situations like this still exist in this wealthy county. Regrettably, it does, and we are here to serve our neighbors in need.

In addition to assisting individual income-qualified homeowners, we are focused on forging partnerships to help nonprofits in the community. Together we can do so much! We have recently joined with Reverend Tim Warner and two of his congregations to renovate The Emanuel House, which is a home for young formerly homeless moms and their children in Gaithersburg. You may have seen the story about this tremendous effort in the March/April Bethesda Magazine. And, in collaboration with InterFaith Works and ABC Metro DC (Association of Building Contractors), we are making improvements to Becky's House, a home for eight formerly homeless elderly women in Rockville.

The pandemic has hit RTMC hard. While the need for our services has never been greater, our costs have risen dramatically, as we haven't been able to tap our longtime cadre of volunteers to provide the bulk of our workers and instead have had to rely on paid contractors. We are grateful for the support provided by the county which has allowed us to provide critical repairs to 119 homeowners in need so far this fiscal year and we are on pace to reach our goal of 178 homes.

To address the backlog of vulnerable homeowners in desperate need of help, we respectfully request that you consider an additional \$50,000 over and above what is already in the budget to help us address these critical home repair needs in the county. We are doing our best to expand our corporate and individual contribution base. However, this past year has not been easy for anyone. Particularly until the pandemic is over, we anticipate fewer volunteers due to safety concerns and an increase in our costs as we will need to pay contractors to complete much of the work.

Montgomery County is such a great county and a wonderful place to call home. Rebuilding Together Montgomery County is proud to be part of its affordable housing team and we thank you in advance for your consideration of additional budget support.

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