

Dear Council Members,

My name is Leslia Lazaro and I have lived in Montgomery County for 50 years. The Montgomery County Police Department has several issues that need to be addressed if we're going to have a safe community. There is a decline in recruitment and retention rates. Police are retiring early, leaving to work in another field, and not as many people are applying. Some of the decline may be due to an increase in incidents of racial profiling, contributing to increased scrutiny of the force, which adds to stress police officers experience.

The county has experienced a rise in substance use related death rates, from 2017 to 2018 there was a 5% increase. Although Montgomery County is considered a wealthy county, the starting salary for a police officer is on the lower end; in Montgomery County the salary is \$54,339, compared to \$56,035.20 in Arlington County, VA.

I am requesting that additional funding be provided in the following areas. Training, focusing on cultural awareness, effective interpersonal communication skills, and working with individuals with behavioral health issues. Additional training may take longer and require more funding, but it will provide police officers with the skills and resources to help the public. Additional mental health resources to help police officers address trauma and stress related work issues, and an increase in salaries comparable to neighboring counties. With these changes, I am hopeful to see improvement with the police recruitment and retention rates, which will make Montgomery County a safer place to live.

Thank you for your time.

Leslia Lazaro