

Good evening, Council President Hucker, Vice President Albornoz, and members of the County Council. My name is Agnes Leshner and I spent many years working in the County's child welfare services agency.

I am now retired but am involved with several non-profit agencies in Montgomery County. My concern are our neighbors in need who are struggling to pay rent, lack food security, and have difficulty finding health care and employment. I think of Sophie, a single mother with two children who lost her job during the COVID pandemic and has been on the verge of losing her apartment and is often struggling to feed her children.

I am here to urge the Council to support efforts to provide more low income housing for people at risk of homelessness, like Sophie. Funding is needed for subsidized housing and rental assistance to help people live productive lives.

In addition, many families need help securing enough food. For example, Interfaith Works opened a food hub 3 months ago, and they have served 17,000 people in just 3 months.

We also badly need an expansion of programs to help individuals who experience unemployment. Interfaith Works has a vocational program that helps people find jobs but it too cannot meet the need and they have a waiting list of over 40 people.

A final request is to increase funding for wages by 3% to help non profits meet the basic minimum wage. The increase would help keep essential, dedicated, caring staff badly needed to serve low income, needy residents, like Sophie.