

**Montgomery County Council Public Hearing - FY22 Operating Budget  
April 6, 2021**

My name is Devorah Stavisky, I live in District 5, and this testimony is presented on behalf of both myself and Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). JUFJ represents over 2,700 Jews and allies from across Montgomery County, who act on our shared Jewish values by pursuing social and economic justice and racial equity in our local communities.

Jewish communities have just finished celebrating Passover, which requires us to envision what it means to leave *Mitzrayim*, a narrow place of oppression, and create a world where all people would have what the Torah calls *dei machsoro*, resources sufficient for their needs. We are called to be partners in the creation of that world — and now, more than a year into a global pandemic and a year after the summer of protests against systemic racism, that call is louder than ever. We cannot simply return to the status quo.

JUFJ joins our partners in the Montgomery County Defund Policing & Invest in Communities Coalition to call for the following budget items:

**1. Licensed Clinical Social Workers in High Schools:** We thank the Councilmembers who have supported Bill 46-20 to remove law enforcement officers from MCPS schools. Following the lead of the student organizers who have been calling for police free schools, we urge the County Council to add \$2.6 million to the budget to fund a culturally competent licensed clinical social worker at each MCPS high school.

**2. Rental Assistance:** There is an eviction crisis taking place -- as of this week, County courts are open and 7,000 Montgomery County households are at immediate risk of eviction. We call on County leadership to fund emergency rental relief, plus long term rental assistance, to mitigate the incoming tsunami of homeless families.

**3. Mental Health Crisis Response Teams:** We thank Council President Hucker and other members of the Council for your support of additional mobile crisis response units. We appreciate the increased funding from the County Executive, and we urge the Council to fund even more teams for full, 24/7 county coverage.

**4. Automated Traffic Enforcement:** We thank the Council for unanimously supporting MC 4-21 (now HB564), which would authorize the County to move speed camera, bus camera, and red light camera enforcement from MCPD to the Department of Transportation. We are glad that the County Executive's proposed budget nearly doubles the funds for automated traffic enforcement, which decreases the need for traffic enforcement officers. We ask the Council to correspondingly decrease the funding for traffic police from the police budget and move those funds to other critical areas of need.

**5. No New Funding for MCPD (including for training and data collection):** We thank the Council for working on Bill 45-20 to require more robust data collection by MCPD. We urge the Council to ensure that no new funds are added to the police budget to fund the requirements of this. We also urge the County not to invest additional funds into training — as laid out in the Reimagining Public Safety Taskforce’s budget working group report, training does not decrease use of force incidents. The most effective way to decrease police brutality is to decrease the number of interactions between police officers and the public.

JUFJ thanks the County Council for this opportunity to submit our views on the FY22 operating budget, and we look forward to working with you to move these priorities forward.