February 1, 2022

Dear Montgomery County Council,

We write to you as one of the leading organizations that represent Hispanic nurses known as the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, DC Metro Chapter. As nurses, we work diligently to provide care for our community members in different settings. Nurses often times provide care to patients and families during vulnerable states. In practice, we see and provide nursing care to patients that live with obesity across different age groups. Obesity is a risk for poor health and a cascade of other illnesses. However, we understand the value of prevention and preventative care in our healthcare system. This bill is an example of a way that we can mitigate the potentially damaging effects of obesity that impact children during different development stages. According to the CDC in 2018, rates of obesity were as follows according to the different age categories:

- 13.4% among 2 to 5 years old
- 20.3% among 6 to 11 years old
- 21.2% among 12 to 19 years old

We cannot ignore the prevalence of obesity nor its detrimental effects in our children and community. Children who have obesity more likely to have other conditions such as: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, liver disease, sleep apnea, asthma, anxiety, and depression—to name a few (CDC, 2021).

Therefore, we believe that this bill in Montgomery County is a feasible approach to ensure that when families eat out, there is a healthy option available for children that contains a food item from each of the food groups (fruits, grains, vegetables, protein, and dairy). In nursing practice, we respect our patients' autonomy or the right to make a personal choice regarding their medical care, but this right/value translates to everyday life as well. Everyone has a right to make a choice, but we can most certainly help "make the healthy choice, the easy choice" by passing this bill.

Thank you so much.

Erika Ventura Castellon, BSN, RN
President
National Association of Hispanic Nurses, DC Metro Chapter