



Montgomery County Council Budget Hearing

April 20, 2022

Good afternoon, Members of the Montgomery County Council:

My name is Manny Hidalgo and I serve as Executive Director of Shepherd's Table. Headquartered in the County's Progress Place building in Downtown Silver Spring, our non-profit's mission is to improve the quality of life, create a pathway towards self-sufficiency and inspire hope for the most vulnerable experiencing food insecurity, homelessness, and poverty. Since 1983 we have been preparing hot, nutritious meals coupled with comprehensive social services to thousands of the most vulnerable residents of our County. This past December we served our 2 millionth meal and we're proud to say that we've never missed a day of serving a meal.

Since the start of the pandemic in early 2020, we have experienced a 59% increase in demand for our meal and social services, and yet funding from Montgomery County has only risen 6%. Fortunately, individual donors have stepped up and we have experienced a remarkable 76% increase in giving from them over the last two years. Foundations also stepped up their giving to Shepherd's Table during the pandemic by 60%. Places of Worship also significantly increased their giving by 41%. **Now with inflation rising and donor fatigue setting in we have started to see a 43% decline in individual donations as of February of this year. Therefore, we request that the County Council step up its commitment to serving the most vulnerable in our community and raise its funding for Shepherd's Table for FY23 from the County Executive's proposed 6% increase to \$463,568 – a 59% increase in funding to match the 59% increase in demand.**

It's important to note that our total funding for 2022 is projected to be over \$2 million and therefore such an increase in Montgomery County funding would still only represent 22% of all our funding for the year. Shepherd's Table will continue to be an exemplary non-profit organization that leverages County resources on a nearly 5:1 basis and that attracts 2,000 volunteers and \$1.5 million worth of in-kind donations. We are not requesting that the County supplant the private sector's commitment – just rise to the bar that they set during the pandemic so that we can continue helping thousands of our most vulnerable County residents create a pathway towards self-sufficiency.