

April 10, 2023

Montgomery County Council
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Councilmembers:

My name is John Bogasky. I am writing to support the County Executive's proposed FY24 budget for **Non-Departmental Accounts (NDA) Community Grants**. In particular, I support the provisions that target funds to organizations that support individuals with disabilities.

I have much experience with these organizations and the people that they support. I serve on the Board of two such local organizations ([The Treatment and Learning Centers](#) and [ArtStream](#)) and one national organization ([SourceAmerica](#)). I serve as the Parent-Coordinator for the [Montgomery County Advisory Committee](#) for [Maryland Inclusive Housing](#). I also serve as Treasurer for [Special Olympics Maryland-Montgomery County](#) and coach in three Special Olympics Sports (Snowshoe, Bocce, and Golf). Finally, I am the proud parent of my 31-year-old son with intellectual disabilities.

In addition to the organizations where I have leadership roles, I have much experience with many other organizations that help support and enrich the life of my son and the many Special Olympics athletes that I coach. These organizations include [Main Street Connect](#), [SEEC](#), [Upcounty Community Resources](#), [Potomac Community Resources](#), [VisArts](#), [Spirit Club](#), and [Jubilee](#). There are many other organizations, all of whom add significantly to the quality of life in our County and deserve support.

As an example, I want to focus on one organization, Main Street Connect (Main Street). My son has lived at Main Street since the week the building opened in July 2020. Main Street offers a unique community or people with and without disabilities empowered by a rich activity program that gives the community reasons to gather. While my son previously lived in an MPDU apartment elsewhere in Rockville Town Center, moving to Main Street has made transformative improvements in his life. He is far less isolated, regularly enjoying chance encounters with friends as well as Main Street's activity.

Through my Board membership with SourceAmerica, I have had the opportunity to give Main Street tours to nonprofit leaders from across America, including SourceAmerica's former Chairman. After his tour, he said that seeing Main Street had completely changed his view of what was possible for people with disabilities living independently. This was true despite his 40 years leading organizations that support people with disabilities. Main Street is a national leader right here in Montgomery County. It deserves support, as do so many of the organizations I support.

Support for NDA Community Grants

I support the County Executive's proposed FY24 budget for **Non-Departmental Accounts (NDA) Community Grants**. In particular, I appreciate that:

- The grants provide opportunities for nonprofits that have not previously received county funding.

- The grants target \$1.5 million specifically to organizations that support individuals with disabilities, individuals that I know well, and whose lives depend on the organizations that support them.
- Funding levels were increased for the Underserved Communities Project grants (from \$750,000 in FY23 to \$1.26 million in FY24) and for the Nonprofit Technical Assistance and Management Support grants (from \$750,000 in FY23 to \$1 million in FY24). While I greatly appreciate these increases, they are dwarfed by the needs. I understand that County nonprofits requested more than \$9 million for each category in FY23.

I ask that the Council not make any changes to the above provisions of the County Executive's proposed budget unless it were to make further increases.

Request for Additional Inflationary Increase

While I appreciate the 3% inflationary increase that the County Executive included in his FY24 budget, I ask that the Council add 3.6% to bring the total increase to 6.6% to match the rate of increase in the Consumer Price Index over the last year. I ask that the 6.6% increase be applied to community grants, contracts in departmental base budgets, and multi-year contracts.

Request for Continued Simplification of the Grants Process

Additionally, I ask that you continue to support a simplified grants process, including:

- Realistic timelines for applications, reporting and payment
- Support for indirect costs including administrative and evaluation expenses
- Streamlined submission of invoices and reimbursement claims
- A simplified and more flexible budget amendment process

Simplifying the process ensures that nonprofit staff time is not unduly diverted from focusing on the needs of the people they serve.

Support for Funding for Affordable Housing

Finally, I appreciate the County Executive's focus on affordable housing in the FY24 budget. Main Street was made possible in part thanks to a Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) loan from the County. I know that the need is great from my work with Maryland Inclusive Housing, and that we need many programs to create the quantity of affordable housing our County needs. We hope that the Council will prioritize multiple types of funding that support more affordable housing initiatives, including workforce housing.

Conclusion

Thank you for your commitment to the County's most vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, and thank you for your ongoing support of nonprofits whose support makes their lives possible. I know from my national work that Maryland and Montgomery County are among the leaders in supporting people with disabilities. I respectfully request your consideration of the above requests so

that these nonprofits can continue their essential work helping people with disabilities thrive in our community.

Sincerely,

John Bogasky

Board Member – Treatment and Learning Centers

Board Member – ArtStream

Board Member – SourceAmerica

Parent-Coordinator, Montgomery Committee for Maryland Inclusive Housing

Treasurer – Special Olympics Maryland – Montgomery County

Treasurer – Strathmore Bel Pre Civic Association

Vice President – Glenmont Exchange

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