

Testimony Regarding the FY24 Operating Budget

Joni Marie Washington-Stahl

**This testimony is being submitted by Jeff Stahl on behalf of Joni Marie Washington-Stahl, who sadly passed away on March 23, 2023.*

Message from Jeff Stahl: *Joni was always an exceptionally compassionate person who never stopped trying to make the world better. She knew that my own childhood was spent being hungry and letting myself into home after school, and she saw that same thing repeatedly throughout our apartment complex. I know first-hand the enormous impact being hungry as a child, feeling alone, or having effective parental responsibility for younger siblings while still being a child oneself can have on one's life, and she easily saw that too. It angered her that in an affluent county, we could still have such impacts on children. As Napoleon once said "Ability without Opportunity is meaningless." I would please urge you to approve Joni's request. Thank You.*

Good afternoon esteemed Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass and honored county council members.

Despite the fact that I have recently been released from the hospital only two days ago, I thought that is was important to come and speak with you today. I have come to ask you to allocate more funds to pre and post after school programs for Montgomery County elementary school children, grades one to six. Thousands of Montgomery County school children go to school unkempt and hungry each day to tackle what should be their one and only job of the day, to focus on learning and to do well in school. Instead the go to school to get something to eat, seeking sanctuary from a possible egregious home or community environment. After school they are released into a less than desirable community environment waiting for their parents to come home from work.

Sixty years ago, when I started grade school, my mom was there to make sure that went to school presentable and well fed. She made sure that I knew that I was returning from school to a safe environment. Her efforts afforded me the dignity and presence of mind to do well in school.

I have come to you today to ask as much for thousands of Montgomery County school children, grades one to six. Please give them their dignity, a sense of safety and the presence of mind to focus on their studies and do well in school by allocating more funds towards pre and afterschool programs.

Thank you for allowing me to address this matter before you today.

Sincerely,

Joni Washington.