

Montgomery County Peer Support Testimonial

Good afternoon esteemed members of the Montgomery County, Maryland City Council. My name is Terence Hill, and I am here to speak on behalf of the Certified Peer Support Specialists in our community and advocate for including our services in the city's 2024 budget.

I am currently employed by Pathways to Housing Montgomery County as a Certified Peer Support Specialist, and I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact of our services on individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges. We provide a crucial connection between individuals and the mental health and substance use system by offering emotional support, resources, and advocacy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the mental health and substance use crisis in our community, especially among the displaced residents of Montgomery County. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in four adults experience mental illness in any given year, and one in 12 adults live with a serious mental illness. In addition, substance use disorders affect 19.3 million adults in the United States. These statistics highlight the need for advocacy and support for individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges.

Investing in Certified Peer Support Specialist services is an evidence-based solution that can improve recovery outcomes and reduce hospitalizations and

emergency room visits. According to a study published in the Journal of Psychiatric Peer support services reduce hospital readmissions by 25%, decrease emergency room visits by 34%, and reduce the overall cost of care by 17% in our County.

As Certified Peer Support Specialists, we need help accessing adequate funding to provide our services. The Montgomery County City Council can prioritize funding for Certified Peer Support Specialist services in the 2024 budget, which will benefit the individuals we serve and the community. Especially with the largest increase of opioid deaths which was reported 869 in our state last year.

Therefore, I urge the Montgomery County City Council to prioritize funding for Certified Peer Support Specialist services in the 2024 budget. Thank you for your time and consideration.