

Dear County Executive Marc Elrich,

I am writing to express my disappointment in your proposed FY24 operating budget, which includes a 10% property tax increase. As a concerned resident of Montgomery County, I believe this increase is unjustified, especially given the economic challenges many in our community face.

I want to remind you that you barely won the Democratic primary; please stop behaving like you have a mandate for property tax increases. As such, you are supposed to represent all county residents, not just a narrow minority. I believe that your proposed property tax increase primarily benefits this narrow minority while disregarding the needs and interests of the broader community. While I understand the need to fund our schools and other critical public services, I believe that the proposed property tax increase places an undue financial burden on homeowners, who are still recovering from the adverse effects of the pandemic and have faced 20% increases in property assessments. Enough is Enough.

Furthermore, it is concerning that you have exploited a loophole to bypass the need for unanimity on the council, thereby undermining trust in our local government and eroding public confidence in the council's decision-making. What you continue to do as County Executive is to create polarity and divisiveness under the pretext of "equality": what you are doing in fact is exactly the opposite. I would also like to remind you of the precedent you have set by attempting to increase property taxes in the past, using a different methodology to calculate the charter limit. In 2018, you proposed a \$66 million property tax increase, which the council promptly rejected. In 2020, you attempted another tax increase, which the council also rejected. It is disheartening to see that you continue to push for property tax increases despite the council's clear opposition to them in the past. And how the heck does this make this more affordable for new homeowners to come into the County and purchase a home? I guess this is why MoCo has stagnant growth under your leadership.

You are asking for a huge increase in the MCPS budget, but where is the accountability for MCPS' declining test scores since pre-pandemic and dubious performance? MCPS already consumes 47% of the budget, how much is enough? Other counties, and municipalities have superior results with far less money. Meanwhile, Fairfax County is in the process of considering lowering property taxes. What are you trying to accomplish here?

I urge you to reconsider your proposal and work collaboratively with stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community members, to identify alternative, more equitable, and sustainable solutions to meet our school system's funding needs. Montgomery County needs a budget that prioritizes the needs of its residents, reflects our shared values, and is affordable and sustainable in the long-term. I respectfully admonish you for your proposed 10% property tax increase and urge you to reconsider it. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Harisch Sood