

April 16th, 2024

Dear Council President Friedson & Montgomery County Council,

We write to you today to encourage your consideration and approval of the Empowering Communities through the Montgomery County Pride Family emergency funding request. This request, submitted by the Montgomery County LGBTQIA+ Advisory Group, represents a unique opportunity for the County to address the historic lack of investment in support for the LGBTQIA+ community, address the long-term impacts of decentralized services for our LGBTQIA+ neighbors, and strengthen our shared commitment to a diverse Montgomery County.

According to the Montgomery County Survey of the LGBTQIA+ Community released in 2023, 44.9% of our LGBTQIA+ neighbors reported experiencing discrimination in our county, with 22% indicating that discrimination happened in public spaces. 41.1% indicated difficulty in finding gender-affirming care, with 41.8% reporting difficulty finding gender affirming mental health care. These numbers are re-inforced by a recent report produced by the County Council Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) which emphasized the need for centralized services and space to support the needs of our LGBTQIA+ community¹.

Many of our faith communities are de facto gathering spaces for LGBTQIA+ persons. Yet the same Montgomery County Survey indicated that a majority of our LGBTQIA+ neighbors feel uncomfortable and unsafe in faith communities. For every one person we serve, the survey indicates there are five who—because of their relationship with religious institutions—we cannot. And while we appreciate the efforts of the County to begin addressing these challenges through creative partnerships with organizations like CCI, more work is required.

We are committed to being your partners in that work. And we, uniquely, understand the challenge of serving a diverse community with diverse needs with few or no resources. This \$386,600 funding request, which will exponentially increase access to services and personnel dedicated to creating safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ persons, represents only 0.006% of the \$6.7 billion dollar budget passed last year. For a 0.006% adjustment to last year's budget, the County Council has the unique opportunity to begin responding to what your LGBTQIA+ constituents are telling you they need.

Not only does that funding create opportunities for LGBTQIA+ community events, but networks that are better situated than current County resources to respond to the unique challenges and needs of our LGBTQIA+ constituents. It represents a meaningful investment in ensuring that in a

¹ Latham, K. (2024, January 16). *Transgender Healthcare in Montgomery County*. www.montgomerycountymd.gov. https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/2024_Reports/OLOReport2024-1.pdf

world where trans persons are 66% more likely to contract HIV, there is increased access to gender-affirming care. It will help provide safe spaces for our youth to receive mental health support and build positive, affirming community - when last year 45% of LGBTQIA+ youth in our country reported suicidal ideation and the 60% who wanted mental health support were unable to receive it². It means building a community of care for the thousands of LGBTQIA+ elders in our County at a time when 72% of LGBTQIA+ elders in our country report fear of discrimination in traditional government agencies for elder care and support³.

Increased collaboration between the positions and programs outlined in the request will also leverage shared knowledge and experience to increase impact, build creative public-private partnerships, and help us focus our sometimes isolated strategies for supporting, enriching, and empowering LGBTQIA+ lives of every age, stage, and story. Your favorable vote on this bill is one step among several toward creating dedicated spaces, places, and opportunities for your LGBTQIA+ constituents and members to not just survive in Montgomery County, but to thrive.

Sincerely,

Title	Name	Faith Community
<i>Rev</i>	<i>Judith Sherk</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
<i>Rev. Dr.</i>	<i>Laura Norvell</i>	<i>Faith United Methodist Church - Rockville</i>
<i>Rev. Dr.</i>	<i>Emily A. Peck</i>	<i>Faith UMC Rockville</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Kara Scroggins</i>	<i>North Bethesda United Methodist Church</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Angela M. Wells</i>	<i>Christ UMC</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Anna Broadbent-Evelyn</i>	<i>Grace Episcopal Church</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Samantha DiBiaso</i>	<i>Living Faith Lutheran Church</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Joey Heath-Mason</i>	<i>St. Paul's UMC - Kensington</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Kate Mackereth Fulton</i>	<i>Trinity UMC - Germantown</i>

² 2022 national survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health. The Trevor Project. (2022). <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/>

³ *LGBT older adults: - facts at a glance*. www.lgbtmap.org. (2010b). <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/lgbt-older-adults-facts-at-a-glance.pdf>

<i>Reverend</i>	<i>K. William Newton</i>	<i>St. Paul UMC</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Sarah Reynolds</i>	<i>St. John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>William E. Green</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Kathleen B Barden</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Sari Ateek</i>	<i>St. John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Ali K.C. Bell</i>	<i>Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation</i>
<i>Reverend</i>	<i>Anne Derse</i>	<i>St. John's Norwood</i>
	<i>Rachel Hedrick</i>	<i>Faith United Methodist, Rockville, MD</i>
	<i>Tamara James</i>	<i>Faith United Methodist - Rockville, MD</i>
	<i>Kathleen King</i>	<i>Faith United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Carol Henley</i>	<i>Faith UMC</i>
	<i>Pamela Kessler</i>	<i>Faith United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Karl Debus-Lopez</i>	<i>Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist</i>
	<i>Tanner Wray</i>	<i>Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation</i>
	<i>Dianne Seiffert</i>	<i>Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation</i>
	<i>Carol Ehrlich</i>	<i>Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation</i>
	<i>Andrea Luce</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Catherine Hargrove</i>	<i>Silver Spring United</i>

		<i>Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Darren Fenwick</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Margaret Hilton</i>	<i>St. John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish</i>
	<i>Penelope Winder</i>	<i>St. John's Norwood Episcopal Church</i>
	<i>Margaret Herbst Sanders</i>	<i>Episcopal</i>
	<i>Jason West</i>	<i>St John's Norwood Episcopal Church</i>
	<i>Michael Stratmoen</i>	<i>Saint John's Norwood Episcopal Parish</i>
	<i>Ezra Towne</i>	<i>Unitatian Universalist</i>
	<i>Jennifer Young</i>	<i>Faith United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Kevin Swanson</i>	<i>Christ United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Sarah Hassmer</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Denise Galbo</i>	<i>St. John's Norwood</i>
	<i>Lisa Raisner</i>	<i>St John's Norwood Episcopal Church</i>
	<i>Maya Crone</i>	<i>St John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish, Chevy Chase MD</i>
	<i>Robert Hartmann</i>	<i>St John's Episcopal Church, Bethesda</i>
	<i>Christina Files</i>	
	<i>Dawn Molloy</i>	<i>St. John's Episcopal Church, Norwood Parish</i>
	<i>Christina Palacios</i>	<i>St. John's</i>

	<i>Scott McNulty</i>	<i>St. John's Norwood Parish</i>
	<i>Marge Kimaki</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Mary Alice Kautz</i>	<i>Silver Spring United Methodist Church</i>
	<i>Lisa Middleton</i>	<i>Community Adjacent</i>
	<i>Christy Prendergast</i>	<i>Silver Spring UMC</i>
	<i>Patsy M Brannon</i>	<i>Silver Spring UMC</i>
	<i>Elizabeth Scott</i>	<i>Silver Spring UMC</i>