

**Testimony in Support of
Special Appropriation #25-42 to the FY25 Operating Budget**

My name is Mara Greengrass, and I am a resident of Randolph Hills in District 6 and a member of Congregation Beth El in Bethesda. On behalf of Jews United for Justice (JUFJ), I am submitting this testimony in support of allocating an additional \$3.6 million to broaden emergency rental assistance and restart the Short-term Housing and Resolution Program (SHARP).

JUFJ represents over 2,000 Jews and allies across Montgomery County who act on our shared Jewish values to advance social, economic, and racial justice in our local community. JUFJ has consistently supported housing initiatives such as rental assistance, because we believe that keeping people in their homes is more ethical and more economical for the county.

Currently, I have two friends experiencing homelessness here in Montgomery County: JT, who spent six months living in their car before getting a bed at a shelter, and L, who is living in an upcounty motel because veterinary bills caused them to fall behind on rent.

The funding being voted on this week could help both of my friends—as well as many other county residents—in life-changing ways. For L, who works a full-time job, access to one month of emergency rental assistance could have prevented their eviction. Now that they are living in a motel, Rapid Rehousing could put L back on the path of stable housing they had been on for so long. Similarly, rental assistance would be cheaper than a shelter bed and psychologically healthier for JT.

Jewish tradition teaches us it is our responsibility to care for our neighbors who live without a stable place to live. For example, the holiday of Sukkot is a yearly acknowledgement of the insecurity of temporary housing and the human craving for a permanent home. By approving this money, the council will demonstrate our shared values and commitment to keeping people housed with dignity.

The Montgomery County Council has a powerful opportunity to continue supporting low-income and rent-burdened members of our community. We urge you to vote in favor of the \$3.6 million allocation to provide immediate and tangible help to residents of Montgomery County experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

Thank you.