

Re: Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center FY 2026 Budget
Date: April 6, 2025

Greetings,

My name is Rebekah Young, and I reside in Montgomery County, Maryland. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support for MCASAC's FY2026 budget. I am a regular dog-walking volunteer at the shelter, and have observed first-hand the dedication of MCASAC personnel in caring for the shelter animals. I strongly support fully funding MCASAC to continue its vital services, as these services directly contribute to the safety and health of the community.

I particularly wish to express my support for additional staffing to provide adequate daily care for the dogs. The direct daily care of the dogs is largely provided by Animal Care Attendants (ACAs), and as staffed, dogs may be left kenneled from 14 to 20 hours. It appears that this is because there are not enough personnel to provide them with time outside the kennels, and especially not enough personnel to provide them with an evening break. Generally, no staff provides the dogs with walks after 5 pm, and morning walks depend on volunteers beginning at 8 am. With the number of dogs in the kennels available to volunteers for walking, it can take anywhere from 10 am until noon for all of the dogs to be walked in the morning. The length of time kenneled leads to increased stress on the part of the dogs, and likely on the part of the staff tasked with their care and well-being. Frankly, it also leads to messy kennels, creating more work for the ACAs. While the ACAs do an awesome job of cleaning the kennels, more cleaning means that they have less time to walk or provide enrichment in the form of play time to the dogs.

According to the Maddie's Operational Consult report from September 2023, for MCASAC to meet the relevant standard of care, it needed 23 ACAs for FY2022-23, based on the number of animals in its annual care. (If you are unfamiliar with the Maddie's Operational Consult report, there is a link to it on the MCASCA website.) It is my understanding that MCASAC has just as many - and maybe more - animals in its care on an annual basis now. Currently, MCASAC has 13 ACAs currently providing care to the animals, with plans to add more. However, this still leaves a significant deficit to adequately care for the animals, as noted in the Maddie's report. Maddie's offered several recommendations to address the staffing shortfall, including adding ACAs, training other staff members to walk dogs and provide other assistance, and hiring temps to fill in for staff on light duty. Following Maddie's recommendations by adding ACAs would go a long way towards decreasing the number of hours the dogs are kenneled without a break, with a concomitant decrease in stress to the animals, and the humans who care for them.

Lastly, it is my understanding that MCASAC has started a low/cost spay and neuter clinic for the community, and I wholeheartedly support the funding and implementation of this clinic as quickly and robustly as possible. Too many of the dogs I see that come in as either strays or owner surrenders have obviously had puppies. Others appear to be young animals that for reasons beyond their control have become homeless. These dogs deserve to be loved and wanted members of the community, but there are simply too many of them. A robust community spay and neuter program should go a long way in reducing the number of animals ending up at the shelter and in MCASAC's care for months at a time.

Thank you for your past support of MCASAC, and please continue to support it so that it may continue its vital services to the community.

Sincerely,

Rebekah Young