

Montgomery County Council
April 7, 2025

Testimony in Support of Interfaith Works
Lucy Swartz, Volunteer (Silver Spring, MD)

I have lived in Montgomery County for 45 years, currently in Silver Spring, and am here today to support full funding for Interfaith Works (IW). I have been a volunteer with IW for over 10 years. I began volunteering with the Vocational Services Program to help clients develop their resumes, apply for jobs online, and practice interviews, while always providing encouragement for their efforts. Because our clients do not have the technical skills or access to a computer and the Internet for online job searches and applications, support from IW's Vocational Services Program is the only way these clients are able to find jobs to support themselves and their families.

I continue to work with VSP clients, and now I also volunteer with most of IW's housing services programs, organizing donated supplies for easy accessibility by staff and residents. With this organizing mission, I am at one of the shelters every week and always see the staff treating all the residents with nothing but kindness and respect. The staff calls residents by name and meets with them regularly, individually and in groups, to address their needs. In return, I see the residents' kindness toward the staff and certainly toward me as a volunteer.

IW's clients and residents come to us because they are desperate, most often through no fault of their own. Sometimes they have made bad choices as we all do, but had no resources to recover from them. They do not have the support of family or friends. They have not had educational opportunities, and may have suffered abuse. They may have lost a job because of an economic downturn or a health crisis, or they may not be able to get a job because of prevalent age, gender, and race discrimination, not to mention language barriers.

With the strong financial support of Montgomery County Government and our generous donors, and the dedication of IW management, staff, and volunteers, Interfaith Works provides critically needed resources and support to our less fortunate neighbors. I am proud to be a part of this organization, and proud to be living in a county that makes helping others a high priority. *I ask that you continue to provide the funding that IW needs to continue its excellent and cost-effective work finding jobs and providing housing to those who so urgently need it.*