

**Montgomery County Council
FY26 Operating Budget Hearing
Testimony
Carrie Fitzgerald
Montgomery College AAUP representative
Monday, April 7, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.**

Hello, my name is Carrie Fitzgerald. I am a Professor of astronomy and physics at Montgomery College. I also serve as the director of our astronomical observatory and planetarium. I am here today to ask for your support of the College's proposed operating budget.

I've been at Montgomery College for sixteen wonderful years. Prior to that, I served as a scientist and emergency responder for the National Nuclear Security Agency where I researched nuclear forensics and responded to nuclear emergencies at home and abroad.

I'm proud of that work, but nothing has given me more pride or satisfaction than being a part of Montgomery College. It is impossible for me to adequately convey in the three minutes I have how incredibly special our college is, and how much our work matters to our students and our community. We aren't just teachers- we are mentors, counselors, and career advisors. You may already know that Montgomery College is the most diverse community college in the continental United States, serving many students who are the first in their family to go to college.

Because of the support you've given us, we have been able to put thousands of students on a path to a better life. I see first-hand what we do in the sciences, and I know my humanities colleagues have similar stories. In my department, we mentor student research, we connect students with internships and opportunities with laboratories and universities, and we travel with them to competitions and conferences. These are transformative experiences for our students.

Fundamentally, we strive for excellence as educators as we train the future workforce of Montgomery County. We work every day to elevate our students, our community, and one another, because we believe it matters. We believe every person who walks into our classrooms matters and that they deserve the finest education that we can provide.

We also take our role as a community college seriously. We welcome the community to our campuses for events and workshops. Whether it's an art exhibition, play, musical performance, or observatory night, we are there providing education and enrichment for our neighbors. Every year we host numerous programs for public school students, scouts, senior groups, and nonprofits.

All of this that I've said, these aren't just words to me. I identify with my students deeply. Like so many of them, I am the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants, and I am the first in my family to go to college. I am here today because of the many teachers and mentors who believed in me and supported me when I was a student. I know first-hand how important our work is.

On behalf of the full-time faculty, I am asking the Council to continue to invest in us by fully funding the College's FY'26 budget request. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your past support and your anticipated continued support.