

Testimony  
Montgomery County Council  
FY26 Operating Budget Hearing  
Sharon Friedman  
April 7, 2025

Good evening!

Thank you for the opportunity to speak—and all of your good work to move our county forward.

My name is Sharon Friedman.

I live here, work here and raised a family here—so like you, I am deeply invested in the future of our county.

Tonight, I ask you to invest in the Collective Impact Center—as another way to invest in our shared futures here in the County.

When I retired from the then Montgomery County Mental Health Association—I had time to reflect on my long career as a nonprofit leader and community activist. I and many others came to the conclusion, Montgomery County needed a new way to move our community forward.

It was clear to us that we needed a new way

- to listen
- to learn
- to hear all the voices in our community
- to connect the positional leader with our many experiential leaders
- to lead with equity
- to build trust
- and, to coauthor solutions and to act.

For over 10 years, MMF did just this with its cross-sector leadership group that included businesses, nonprofits, education, government, and philanthropy representatives. Along with hundreds of additional community members, MMF defined problems, convened experts, and developed *Calls to Action* to drive systems change to move our community forward—to build a stronger and more just Montgomery County.

As I now reflect on reckoning ahead brought on by the current turmoil, we know working together is the only way forward. But it cannot be business as usual. We can no longer afford inefficient solutions, duplicative or cross-purposed efforts, or the overconfidence that one

sector alone can lead the way. And, we must move forward with an authentically community driven effort that brings a strong equity lens.

*MMF's brand of collaboration, Collective Impact, is made for this moment.*

*And, the Collective Impact Center at Montgomery College can be that place—a national model—where diverse stakeholders, where the renter and property owner, where the parent and the education leader, where the business leader and community activist come together to listen, learn, define problems, and coauthor solutions. In a place where process is paramount and often slows progress, Collective Impact can quicken the pace of good change. The Center can help tackle our most pressing issues in a way that builds trust, leverages the strengths of each sector and brings our diverse community to the table to build a common agenda to enhance the prosperity and the well-being of Montgomery County.*

I ask you to invest in Collective Impact just as I and others did through MMF. I ask you to invest in the Collective Impact Center to meet this moment head on—to Move Montgomery Forward.