

Dear Council President Stewart and Councilmembers:

My name is *Lilly Flower*, and right now I spend most of my time in Silver Spring. I've experienced homelessness off and on since 2016 and I am a domestic violence survivor. With a 71% increase in homelessness in Montgomery County from 2020-2024, and based on my own experiences, I know that it is extremely important that the Montgomery County Council funds programs that provide prevention and exits from homelessness.

In 2016, while I was living in Section 8 housing, I experienced a repeated domestic violence dispute with the father of my children. As a result I had to move my family to Ruth's House three times in three months, because every time I came home, domestic violence would occur again. Finally, I packed up and moved. I've had places to stay since then, sometimes with family, but not a house of my own. When I was experiencing domestic violence, I needed support to be able to move to a home in a different neighborhood, where I could live without fear. During that time, one of my sons was taken from outside of his father's home. I know there are dangers to being homeless for both me and my kids. I'm still seeking housing, so I know that we need all of the money that Housing Justice Montgomery is asking for to help people who are experiencing domestic violence and housing insecurity.

Because of my experiences, I am asking that the council include the following in the FY2026 Budget:

Rapid Rehousing provides short term rental assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as light case management. This is one of SEPH's primary ways it exits people out of the homelessness system. We must fund \$9,475,427 to cover the costs of sheltering and housing of an estimated 642 current clients and 200 new clients in 2026, so that there is enough to fund everyone's exit out of homelessness.

For our neighbors with chronic health conditions and disabilities, housing is healthcare. Yet, too many are left without the long-term support they need. I urge the council to **fund Permanent Supportive Housing** with \$13,735,903 to support both current clients and new individuals that experience the toughest conditions to exiting homelessness.

No one should be left without a home because they can't afford skyrocketing rents. The council **must fund the Emergency Rental Assistance Program** with \$50 million to ensure all 4,723 households that asked for rental assistance receive an average grant of \$10,581.

In order to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity, we must address the housing shortage. I ask that the Council fully fund **affordable housing development** with \$121.3 million to continue addressing the gap.

If the government cannot adequately address housing struggles, at the very least they can support individuals as they transition to new housing. I support \$2.4 million in **Storage and Moving Assistance** to provide families who were evicted by the Sheriff's Office at least six months of storage to be able to recover and restart.

No one should be forced to risk injury just to enter their own home. Many apartment complexes in

Montgomery County remain inaccessible, leaving disabled residents to navigate unsafe conditions daily. We need \$150,000 for the **Montgomery County government to fund retrofitting apartments through nonprofits like Rebuilding Together, ensuring that all residents can live with dignity and safety.**

I believe in a county where no one has to experience the challenges that I've had to go through, and one where everyone has access to safe and affordable housing. I'd like to thank the Council for your time, consideration, and your leadership.

Respectfully,

Lilly Flower