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Support of full and expanded funding for the Montgomery County Pride Family Center

My name is Nadine Masone Mort and I have lived in Montgomery County since 1975. I have been a member and officer of many community organizations as well as a Special Education Mediator for forty years.

It is my privilege to serve on the Montgomery County Pride Family Center's Community Advisory Board (CAB) under the leadership and guidance of Phillip Alexander Downie our brilliant and dynamic CEO.

I am here today to turn the clock back to 1998 when my twins were entering their teens and realizing that they were different from most of their friends. That was when their peers suddenly melted away and they found themselves without the support groups that most other kids had. We were lucky that they had each other and a supportive "chosen" family. Sadly, they had no one their own age to confide in, no safe place to go to be themselves and find support from other kids or adults to share similar experiences and to "belong".

So, I know first had the fear, the deep loneliness and desperate need we are asking you to acknowledge and address today to provide not just continued but increased funding for Montgomery County Family Pride.

You all recognize that this is a very desperate time. The emotional damage the Trump administration's verbal attacks, demeaning policy changes and outrageous scapegoating are like daggers to the heart. They take an emotional and physical toll on the citizens, your neighbors young and old that you represent. Funding for LGBTQIA+ life-affirming and life-saving programs, safe spaces and wellness resources for youth, adults and elders are a **critical** need.

So, today I am asking you to do just **one** thing....the one thing that can make a real impact on the lives of LGBTQIA+ individuals, their families and allies. That one thing is to fully fund and hopefully expand support for the Montgomery County Pride Family Center.

Finally, please accept my most sincere thanks for all you have done to make this amazing lifesaving resource a reality.