

Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 26 Operating Budgets

before

The Honorable Kate Stewart
Council President
Montgomery County Council

April 8, 2025

Testimony of Aaron Droller
Silver Spring, Maryland

Good evening Council President Stewart and members of the Montgomery County Council. My name is Aaron Droller and I am a resident of Silver Spring. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Operating Budgets.

I testify in strong opposition to the proposed 3.4% property tax increase in the FY 26 budget. It is very disappointing that barely a year after the Council raised property taxes nearly five percent, the County Executive is now proposing an additional tax increase. A property tax increase of this magnitude is regressive and disproportionately harmful to middle and working-class residents that already struggle to afford housing in this county. This proposal is on top of sky-high property tax reassessments and great uncertainty in the Montgomery County economy.

I know affordable housing is very important to this Council and this tax increase will make living in Montgomery County further out of reach for homeowners and renters alike. While this property tax increase is being sold to the public, yet again, as money for our educators, it's clear from the budget being presented that this is mere pretext for irresponsible growth of county government across the board. As I have said before, the County government spending is simply not commensurate with our anemic economic and employment growth. Given the macroeconomic realities we face here, the County government needs to readjust its priorities and not ask residents to bail out the County Executive's inability to make difficult fiscal tradeoffs.

On April 4, 2025, the County Executive appeared on "The Politics Hour" and explained that he proposed the property tax increase because he had to assume the worst case scenario in

terms of burden shifting from the state to county government.¹ He stated, “we told people that we would change things when we see what the final budget is.” Given that the “worst case scenario” as described by the County Executive has not come to pass, the county government no longer has any pretext to raise property taxes. The county must make do with its previous property tax increase and the additional revenue it receives from rising assessments. Please reject this property tax increase in its entirety. Thank you for your time and for your service to Montgomery County.

¹ <https://wamu.org/story/25/04/04/the-politics-hour-montgomery-county-executive-marc-elrich-on-federal-health-agency-firings/>.