



April 9, 2025

## **Testimony to Montgomery County Council**

### **Re: Proposed FY26 Operating Budget**

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) fully appreciates that this is a difficult budget year. There are many unknowns at the federal level and how this will impact the state and local budgets. The LWVMC prefers to avoid pitting one budget concern against another. Instead, we rely upon our well-established positions to support areas of the budget we believe are important. Below are our comments on various sections of the FY26 Operating Budget for Montgomery County based on our supporting positions.

#### Agriculture

**We believe the small increase in the budget for the Office of Agriculture is appropriate.** The Office serves the community well and is needed to protect the Agricultural Reserve.

#### Education

**The League has a long history of support for quality public education and equal educational opportunity for all. We urge the Council to fund the MCPS budget as fully as possible in this difficult year.**

- We recognize that this requires effective staffing for special education and for continued efforts of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to help students who fell behind during the COVID years of remote education.
- We strongly support the *Blueprint for Maryland's Future* and its emphasis on strengthening and expanding high quality early childcare and Pre-K programs.
- We strongly support programs that prepare students who are not college-bound for careers in fields where there is demand for their skills and opportunity for advancement.
- We also support Montgomery College's budget request, especially in view of the crucial role that Montgomery College plays in making college affordable to our residents and in providing workforce training. Both are even more important in view of federal firings.



### Land Use and Transportation

**The LWVMC believes that increasing fees is one way to boost revenue from transportation; the county benefits from the increase in revenue and so does the environment due to fewer cars on the road.** Additional fees also would give the transit budget room to expand, something the recently implemented Great Seneca network did very successfully.

- The county could accomplish this by raising parking fees for residents. Those funds could then be used to enhance pedestrian safety by increasing sidewalk construction and the sidewalk maintenance budget.
- Working with the state, the county could increase tolls on the Intercounty Connector. Other options include more bus advertising, increasing fines overall, and improving implementation of automatic transportation enforcement.
- In addition, information from automatic cameras on school buses should be used to pursue violators.

**The LWVMC understands the importance of encouraging appropriate growth in the county to avoid stagnation.** We applaud the county's implementation of automatic applications for land use and permitting.

- Saving time and money in processing for both the applicant and the county benefits everyone, and the county should encourage this automatic procedure throughout the application and upgrade process.
- The LWVMC uses the information and statistics that the county's policy tools and guidelines generate via the county's adequate public facilities (APF) requirements and we hope this continues.

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Co-presidents