



**Testimony Regarding Montgomery County's FY26 Operating Budget
To the Montgomery County Council from the Steering Committee of the Asian American
Health Initiative.
April 2025**

My name is Dr. Nguyen Nguyen, Vice-Chair of the Asian American Health Initiative Steering Committee. The Steering Committees of the Asian American Health Initiative, joining with the African American Health Program and the Latino Health Initiative, to present an urgent request—to preserve the essential safety net for our vulnerable residents by fully funding (with no cuts to the budget) the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). This includes level funding for the Asian American Health Initiative and our sister initiative/program.

The past several years demonstrated the critical role the three minority communities play, in partnership with DHHS, in safeguarding public health and positioning community members for positive life outcomes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the County struggled to reach the minority communities, the three communities and committees of AAHI, AAHP, and LHI collaborated with DHHS to save lives and build trust with our community. By working together, our Minority Health Initiatives effectively reduced infection rates and dramatically increased vaccination uptake within historically underserved populations. These efforts were made possible by the County's investment in culturally competent, community-driven health strategies.

The pandemic underscored a fundamental truth: when we invest in equity, our entire community benefits. Now, as we navigate new challenges related to funding and policy shifts within the federal government, we must not retreat from the progress AND the relationship we have worked so hard to build. Rather, we must maintain the support and prepare for the next crisis.

Fully funding the DHHS ensures that minority communities continue to have access to critical services. Over the past decade, AAHI has invested significantly in mental health programs, along with resources and partnerships with community partners, to help residents with language barriers access the County's services. It means reinforcing the very infrastructure that allowed us to respond swiftly and effectively when crisis struck. Cutting funding now would not only jeopardize these gains but also deepen the risks that we have worked so hard to address.



We urge you to reaffirm your commitment to health and community well-being for all by fully funding DHHS in this year's budget. The investments you make today will determine the resilience and strength of our County for years to come.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your dedication to a positive future for all residents of Montgomery County.