

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY – COUNTY COUNCIL
APRIL 22, 2025

Good afternoon, Council members: My name is Bonnie Casper and I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns about the proposed 3.5% property tax hike as presented in the County Executive's proposed FY '26 budget.

I have been a resident of the County for 42 years, have been active in the community, and have witnessed many positive changes in the County.

Let me be clear – this is neither the time nor the place to pass such a tax increase.

First, I support creating and maintaining our public schools at the highest level of quality. We should not pit education against other governmental functions. Neither should our support of education detract from investment in other services.

I am a Realtor and while I am not representing GCAAR although a past president, I cannot disassociate myself from my profession. Realtors sell a quality of life – not just properties. We look at our community as an intertwining of housing, jobs, transportation, education, healthcare, the arts, recreation and open spaces. All these elements are reasons why people move to the County – not for just one of them.

We are facing hard times. External factors will create exceptional financial constraints and pressures and our County is disproportionately targeted. Thus we must be mindful that a 3.5% property tax increase will place substantial regressive affordability pressures on the community.

As I understand it, the tax increase comprises just 11% of the new money in the budget. Without the tax hike, the School Board would still receive sufficient funding to meet MCPS' requested budget and still give the other agencies combined an increase that exceeds inflation, therefore, this may not be the math problem that the County Executive has described.

Additionally, for every dollar we add to the school budget, we must realize that we may have to account for that and more in FY'27 due to the Maintenance of Effort requirements.

Homeowners have to tighten their belts – the cost of everything has increased – including eggs – since January 20th and incomes are not keeping pace.

So as I started, I will conclude – this is neither the time nor the place to raise our taxes – we must keep Montgomery County affordable and preserve the quality of life residents seek. Thank you.