

Chelsea Hughes

Dear County Council Members,

The safety of our most vulnerable families hangs in the balance. As a Montgomery County Domestic Violence Advocate with 13 years of experience, I've successfully helped 35 families with over 245 children escape dangerous situations – but countless others remain at risk.

I have been given verbal consent to tell this story.

In my role at JBWCI, I work with a strong woman with a physical disability and 7 children who have survived domestic violence due to HER domestic violence. Her denial and loss of shelter space and available housing led to her calling legal aid for the homeless and being referred to a shelter that is shared by DC, when she sought guidance on getting assistance through Montgomery County.

My client and her 7 children with her abuser have been denied housing, relocation assistance and mental health support. The police were called in 2022, with the end result of her being detained by the police overnight and her return to her children.

When she was finally approved for a housing voucher, they would not allow her to find residency in Montgomery County, allow her to put all 8 of her children on the housing voucher or allow her into wheel chair accessible housing due to the lack there of.

Had there been census research on these specific topics, Montgomery County would be able to build programs to help persons with disabilities, men and larger families facing immediate crisis without redirecting them to DC shelters and housing programs.

I ask that the county council add funding to extend domestic violence programs and services including housing for domestic violence survivors to meet the needs of families with disabilities facing domestic violence, families with 3 or more children facing domestic violence as well as men facing domestic violence.

Have an awesome day,

Chelsea Hughes

JBWCI

founder