

My name is Christine Baker. I have lived at Progress Place since February 8th, 2025. I am 59 years old. I left a full-time job when I entered the shelter. I had to leave suddenly, taking only the clothes on my back.

Since I have been here, I have had a lot of positive experiences. I got clothes from the clothing closet. I have personally grown as a person. It really strengthens you. But I have also seen a lot of fighting, sickness, drinking, drugging, people just out of control due to overpopulation. Mats should be six feet apart to insure you don't get sick but they are 2 feet apart on a good night.

People need more to do with their time, there would be less fighting, sleeping, drugging, drinking. There needs to be more staff and rules reinforced. It all trickles down into the shelter when people just sit stagnant with no hope or place to go. It causes drug use and hopelessness. Budgets need to be bigger to solve this problem, so I am writing to urge Montgomery County to fund the following items:

Emergency Rental Assistance (ERAP): No one should lose their home due to an unexpected financial hardship. I am asking for **\$50 million** to ensure all 4,723 households who requested rental assistance receive the support (average grant of \$10,851) they need to stay housed.

Rapid Rehousing: This program provides short-term rental assistance and case management to those experiencing homelessness. I seek **\$9.47 million** to fully fund current clients and expand assistance to 642 current and 200 additional households in 2026.

Permanent Supportive Housing: For those with chronic mental and physical health conditions and disabilities, stable housing is healthcare. I request **\$13.7 million** to ensure both current clients and new applicants receive the long-term support they need to remain housed.

Moving and Storage Assistance: No family should lose everything they own due to eviction. I propose a **\$2.4 million** investment to provide six months of storage assistance for families displaced by the Sheriff's Office, giving them time to rebuild.

Disability Retrofitting: Many apartment complexes remain inaccessible, forcing disabled residents to navigate unsafe living conditions. I urge the County Council to allocate a **\$150,000** allocation for nonprofit retrofitting programs to make homes safe and accessible for all residents with disabling conditions.

Respectfully, I urge the County Council to fund all of these items, so that we have meaningful exits out of shelters like the one at Progress Place.