



Testimony in Support of Montgomery County's FY26 Proposed Operating Budget

Presented by: Tara Owens, Executive Director, Main Street

Date: April 4, 2025

Good evening, Council President and Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is Tara Owens, and I'm honored to serve as the Executive Director of Main Street. I'm here in strong support of the County Executive's recommended FY26 Budget.

Let me start with a bit about Main Street.

Main Street is more than a building—it's a bold model for inclusive living, created by Jillian and Scott Copeland in response to the lack of housing and social opportunities for their son, Nicol, an adult with developmental disabilities. Since opening our doors in 2020, Main Street has become a thriving, vibrant hub right here in Rockville.

Main Street is three things:

- **An accessible apartment building** with 70 units—75% affordable, with 25% reserved for adults with disabilities.
- **A diverse and inclusive community** of more than 270 members—including 95 Rockville residents—who engage in 12–15 weekly programs spanning social, cultural, educational, and wellness topics.
- **An inclusive employer**, led by our Soulfull Café, which provides meaningful, competitive employment for individuals with and without disabilities.

As proud members of Nonprofit Montgomery, we also stand in strong support of two budget recommendations that will allow nonprofits like ours to thrive:

1. Maintaining the [3% cost of living adjustment for County Contracts](#) for County contracts as recommended by County Executive Elrich.
2. Preserving the County Executive's [recommended budget for the Office of Grants Management](#)

Main Street occupies a unique space in the local nonprofit landscape. We submitted our first grant application just as the Office of Grants Management was being established in



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early 2020. Due to the timing—and then the pandemic—we were initially ineligible for support. When we were finally able to apply in 2023, we received \$5,244, that all qualified applicants received, amid the overwhelming number of grant seekers.

According to the [FY25 resolution](#), several peer organizations—many offering similar programming—have had **noncompetitive contracts** for decades. For example:

- **UCR (Upcounty Community Resources)** – funded since FY21
- **PCR (Potomac Community Resources)** and **Best Buddies** – funded since FY02 or earlier

Our ask is simple: **We respectfully request the opportunity to apply for a noncompetitive contract**, to have access to the same long-term, sustainable funding that similar organizations have received for years.

With looming federal and state budget cuts to Medicaid and DDA funding, the time to act is now. Many of our members are already losing critical supports. Sustaining our programming and community engagement efforts has never been more urgent.

Let me end with a story that brings Main Street's impact to life:

Maddie, a 34-year-old woman with few social connections beyond her sisters, came to Main Street after the devastating loss of her mother—her primary caregiver. At first, she was quiet, hesitant, unsure. But she kept coming back. Over time, she began to participate, to connect, to thrive.

Today, Maddie works out in our gym, joins weekly social and educational programs, and just last week—**for the first time ever**—made plans to go to a movie with a friend *on her own*. Now, she's dreaming of starting a book club and movie group at Main Street.

That's what we do—create space for independence, friendship, and possibility. We're building a stronger, more connected community—one person, one story, one moment at a time.

We thank the Council for your tireless leadership and urge you to preserve the County Executive's recommended Office of Grants Management funding in your final budget.



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Together, we can ensure Montgomery County remains a place where everyone has a seat at the table—and a place to belong.

Thank you.

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