

Dear Council President Stewart and Councilmembers:

My name is Abbe Levin. I am a lifelong resident of Montgomery County. My family business has been in Wheaton for 57 of its 67 years. I am also currently a Board Member of Mid County United Ministries (aka MUM) which provides emergency rent, utility, prescription and food assistance to members of our community in crisis. I have read staggering data that shows a 71% increase in homelessness in Montgomery County from 2020-2024. In the current economic upheaval, with tariffs promising higher prices and the unheard of number of layoffs causing a record rise in unemployment, the number of people dealing with housing and food instability is going to rise. It seems incredibly shortsighted at this time not to address this issue head on, as we are already experiencing a crisis which is only going to grow. Unfortunately, the policy of the current administration is to cut grants while at the same time creating a more and more challenging economic situation. Many of our neighbors are experiencing financial instability for the first time. More residents across the county are accessing food assistance providers while they struggle to make ends meet. Food programs in the schools are also in danger so the assistance food providers give to families is all the more essential to protect the youngest in our community. I urge the Council to fund a 10% increase in food assistance grants to help providers address rising food costs and increasing need. It is important the council also support programs to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity. Please support programs such as Rapid Rehousing, and continue to fund the local organizations such as MUM in your FY2026 Budget.

I want to continue to live in an area where neighbors continue to look after each other, and where our local government is concerned with the wellbeing of the most vulnerable in our community. Sadly, this no longer seems to be a major concern for the current leaders in our country, so it falls to us to continue to assist, speak out, and do what we can to help others in tough times. I still aspire to live in a county and country where housing, healthcare and food is safe, healthy, affordable, and available to everyone.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership during these difficult times.

Respectfully,

Abbe Levin