

My name is Richa Tripathi, I am a junior at John F. Kennedy High School, and I have been a resident of Montgomery County for most of my life.

I am here today to urge the Montgomery County Council to allocate 13.7 million dollars to support people with disabilities or chronic health conditions who face homelessness, and an additional 9.47 million dollars for Rapid Housing to help people exit from homelessness by providing services throughout the process and case management.

I could talk about how people in my family and community have experienced homelessness, or I could talk about the many statistics out there that demonstrate how big an issue homelessness is in Montgomery County, but I'm sure others have made you aware of that already. In fact, we ALL have a story or experience to share about homelessness, if not from our own life, then from our friends, family, and community.

Adequate housing is a recognized human right according to the United Nations, and according to every person who has ever heard one of these stories. Though it feels unfortunate, for me as well, we can't rewrite them and change everyone's lives for the better. What's done is done. However, you have the voice and the vote to act and help those who are suffering *now*, so we can reduce those numbers in the future. Take a second to think about your own story: Have your friends or community members experienced homelessness before? I urge you to think of them while looking at the budget.

Thank you.