

Testimony of Michelle Redd

Montgomery County FY26 Budget Hearing – April 7, 2025

My name is Michelle Redd, and I currently live in the Briggs Chaney area. I use a wheelchair, and I want to speak today about the severe lack of affordable, wheelchair-accessible apartments in Montgomery County.

Because of this lack of accessible housing, I have not been able to take a shower in over ten years. That is not a mistake — ten years. This makes me feel like I do not matter, like I'm invisible. No one should be treated like a third- or fourth-class citizen. It is demeaning and cruel.

And if you are lucky — or blessed — enough to find an apartment with an accessible bathroom, kitchen, counters, and stove, you might as well have a house built, because it is not affordable. Or you're put on a waiting list for years.

I feel diminished and humiliated as a human being. I've worked since the age of 15. I've worked for private companies, county offices, and federal agencies. And now, I'm living in an apartment where I can't even safely cook food for my granddaughter. When I try, I often burn myself, because the stove is not accessible from a wheelchair. That makes me feel less than human.

Because of these experiences, I am urging the County — with all my heart — to fund \$150,000 in the FY26 budget to support retrofits to inaccessible apartments like mine. This could be done through grants that already exist to fund local nonprofits like Rebuilding Together, which already do this kind of work in detached single family homes in our community.

If this retrofit funding is included in the budget, I would finally be able to live in a home that is safe, accessible, and dignified. I could finally take a shower. I could finally feel like a person — a whole person — not like a pet being thrown scraps.

Please fund this. Not just for me, but for the many others who are living in silence, in pain, and in places that were never built with us in mind.

Thank you.