

March 29, 2025

Dear Council President Stewart and Councilmembers:

My name is Thomas Sherman and I am a resident of Montgomery County District 1. I am a retired federal senior executive and have worked with local poverty and housing programs for the past 25 years, both as an employee and volunteer. I am currently a member of the Board of Directors for Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH) and active with Rockville Meals on Wheels (RMOW). I am very concerned that the problems of homelessness, hunger, and senior poverty are worsening in our neighborhoods at the same time that the federal government is threatening reforms that will reduce federal funding. This will require heroic action on the part of our local public and non-profit organizations to fill the void that is coming. It will also place additional demands the County Council to meet the needs that our community has decided are most important, especially the ones that provide prevention and exits from homelessness. Thus, I ask that the Council support the following FY2026 Budget proposals:

No one should be evicted from their home because they can't afford skyrocketing rents due to an emergency or employment crisis. One of the most cost-effective ways to deal with homelessness is to prevent it in the first place. A stitch in time... I ask the Council to fund the Emergency Rental Assistance Program with \$50 million to ensure all 4,723 households that asked for rental assistance receive an average grant of \$10,581.

More and more residents across the county are accessing food assistance providers while they struggle to make ends meet. This is particularly evident in the senior community. The replacement of pensions in the 1980s with employee-managed 401k plans has finally come home to roost. An example is that over 85% of RMOW customers are fully subsidized because their household income is below the federal poverty level. Two years ago, that number was 42%. You should know them because they are your neighbors. I urge the Council to fund a 10% increase to food assistance grants to help providers address rising food costs and increasing need.

In order to prevent homelessness and housing insecurity, we must address the housing shortage. I ask that the Council fully fund affordable housing development with \$121.3 million to continue addressing the gap.

I believe in a county where both housing and food is safe, healthy, affordable, and available to everyone. I'd like to thank the Council for your time, consideration, and your leadership.

Respectfully,
Thomas M. Sherman

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