

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding County Executive Marc Elrich's proposed Fiscal Year 2026 operating budget, which includes a 3.5% property tax increase to support a \$250 million funding boost for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). While I acknowledge the importance of investing in our education system, I believe that such a significant tax increase places an undue burden on residents, especially given the current economic climate. I respectfully propose that the property tax increase be limited to 1-1.5% and that alternative budgetary solutions be explored to achieve the necessary funding for our schools.

Over the past seven years, Montgomery County families have experienced property tax assessment increases ranging from approximately 29% to 40%. This consistent upward trend in property taxes has significantly impacted household budgets, making it increasingly challenging for residents to manage their living expenses. Councilmember Andrew Friedson has highlighted these concerns, stating that "too many residents are struggling to keep up with rising costs" and emphasizing the need to fund essential services without further escalating housing costs.

In light of these challenges, it is crucial to consider alternative approaches to funding the proposed increase for MCPS. The current budget proposal includes \$16.8 million in targeted program reductions and \$28.5 million in vacancy savings from unfilled positions. While these measures are steps in the right direction, further efforts to identify additional efficiencies and cost-saving opportunities within the county's budget could help reduce the reliance on property tax increases.

In conclusion, while the commitment to enhancing our public schools is commendable, it is essential to balance this objective with the financial well-being of Montgomery County residents. I urge the Council to consider limiting the property tax increase to 1-1.5% and to diligently explore alternative budgetary solutions that do not place an excessive burden on taxpayers. By doing so, we can ensure the continued prosperity of our community and maintain the quality of life that makes Montgomery County a desirable place to live.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Arash Soheili

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