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Carol Stern

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

TESTIMONY - FY26 MONTGOMERY COUNTY BUDGET - FAVORABLE

TO: Montgomery County County Council

My name is Carol Stern and I am a resident of Chevy Chase in District 1 and a member of Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda. I am providing this testimony in support of FY26 Montgomery County budget.

Budgets are moral documents. They reveal priorities and values, and as a county, they are the primary way that we care for one another, especially for the vulnerable. That is why we should all take this process so seriously, and that is why the ongoing debate about the budget is so important. A budget is more than just numbers: it's a statement about what type of county we wish to build and maintain together.

The three most important priorities that I want the Council to support are renters rights, eviction prevention, and a fully funded MCPS budget.

Housing is a human right, not a privilege. Yet, year after year, our county refuses to fully invest in the solutions that would prevent the lasting trauma of housing instability. I fully support **Housing Justice Montgomery's five areas for funding**: Emergency Rental Assistance, Rapid Rehousing, Permanent Supportive Housing, Moving and Storage Assistance, and Disability Retrofitting.

I support **fully funding the Board of Education's FY26 Operating Budget recommendations** for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). This also includes **full support of the County Executive's proposed 3.5 cent property tax rate increase** required to fully fund MCPS. In addition, I support the need for **increased funds for special education**, which will only be possible with a fully funded budget.

I support the **Decriminalize Montgomery County Campaign's priorities** which ask that the **County Council fully funds the MCPS operating budget, but also to ensure that more of that funding is directed toward preventative, student-centered measures**—not toward policing, surveillance, or AI-powered “weapons detection” systems.

For all these reasons, I ask the County Council to Approve the FY26 Montgomery County Budget.