

**Testimony Regarding Montgomery County's FY26 Operating Budget  
to the Montgomery County Council from Latino Health Steering Committee, April 2025**

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In partnership with the Steering Committees of Montgomery County's African American Health Program and the Asian American Health Initiative, the Latino Health Steering Committee presents a clear and urgent request: to preserve the essential safety net for our most vulnerable residents by fully funding the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

The past several years have demonstrated the critical role we play, in partnership with DHHS, in safeguarding public health and positioning community members for positive life outcomes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Montgomery County's strategy of uniting rather than dividing our communities paid tremendous dividends. By working together, our Minority Health Initiatives effectively reduced infection rates and dramatically increased vaccination uptake within historically underserved populations. These efforts were possible because of the County's investment in culturally competent, community-driven health strategies.

The pandemic underscored a fundamental truth: when we invest in equity, our entire community benefits. Now, as we navigate new challenges related to funding and policy shifts within the federal government, ranging from increased poverty to prevention and management of health crises, we must not retreat from the progress we have made. Rather, we must build upon it to emerge from this crisis stronger than before.

Fully funding DHHS ensures that minority communities, which together make up the majority of Montgomery County, continue to have access to life-saving services, culturally responsive outreach, and trusted messengers who bridge longstanding gaps in care. It means reinforcing the very infrastructure that allowed us to respond swiftly and effectively when crisis struck. Cutting funding now would not only jeopardize these gains but also deepen risks that we have worked so hard to address.

Please reaffirm your commitment to health and community well-being for all by fully funding DHHS in this year's budget. The investments you make today will determine the resilience and strength of our County for years to come.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your dedication to a positive future for all residents of Montgomery County.