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Thank you for the opportunity to speak w you today.

My name is Carol Pollack-Nelson and I am a longtime resident of Montgomery County.

The reason I am here today is to urge the council to continue with full funding of senior programming at MoCo rec centers.

As we all know, we are an aging population. The number of seniors – both retired and not – increases every year.

MoCo offers diverse senior programming to its residents. These programs include dance, fitness, arts, and technology classes.

I am an instructor at the N Potomac Rec Center. There, I teach Zumba two mornings a week. My Monday class has 75 people enrolled with a waiting list of 10 people. My Wednesday class is also filled with a wait list.

Seniors participating in classes like mine benefit not only from engaging in physical activity, but also the cognitive demands of learning something new, like fast-paced dance moves. Moreover, they derive significant benefits from social interaction with other students. I have observed how friendships develop and classmates support one another. They inquire if someone misses a class due to concern that they may be ill.

Feeling connected in this way can elevate one's mood, their well-being, their mental health, and their physical health. As you can imagine, many of those involved in senior programming are widowed or otherwise single. Many have health issues and/or are caring for a partner at home with significant health issues. Participating in senior programming offers a respite from these challenges and provides an opportunity to learn something new, gain new competencies, and feel like you are part of a group. In other words – to feel good about yourself. I cannot stress enough how important these classes are.

In closing, I wish to add that as a senior myself, I look forward to retiring someday so that I can enjoy classes like Tai Chi, Bollywood dancing, and Bone Builders. I know I will rely on these classes for my physical, cognitive, and social well-being. The opportunity for me to participate in such classes will only be possible if senior programming is fully funded.

Thank you