



OUR MISSION:

Working to enhance the economic prosperity of greater Silver Spring through robust promotion of our member businesses and unrelenting advocacy on their behalf.

May 13, 2025

The Honorable, Kate Stewart, Will Jawando
and Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, Sixth Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and Members of the Council:

On behalf of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, representing more than 300 employers, mostly small and minority owned businesses, in greater Silver Spring and surrounding areas in Montgomery County, the Chamber would like to once again take this opportunity to oppose any proposed tax increases, income or property. The GSSCC recognizes the challenging decisions our county leaders face and as business leaders in Montgomery County, we share a vision of growing the County's economy, creating jobs, and fostering a thriving business community, but it can't be at the literal expense of a shrinking Montgomery County tax base, who is already shouldering 49% of the increases from the BRFA reconciliation.

We ask our county leaders instead to focus on creating an environment where economic development is welcomed, not in a tag line, but in reality. – one that invites investment in our county, includes incentives for growth, and creates competition with our surrounding jurisdictions. A minority-majority, County equity focus area, Silver Spring has been slower to recover, even five years later, from the pandemic, for reasons out of their control. The community continues to be negatively impacted, some would say devastated, by continuing Purple Line Construction, rising prices on basic goods, and a community that is being gutted by Federal layoffs.

The Chamber has always been about making greater Silver Spring a thriving business community, a place where people want to live, work, and play. Like everyone, we know and understand that the school system is a driver of economic health, but the Chamber does not support the increase above MOE being requested by MCPS. Prior increases do not seem to yield higher per pupil spending with any measurable improvements and it's time for increased transparency at MCPS about where prior surpluses have gone and how much of their reserves could be put into funding their own requests. Transparency not just for fiscal issues; but also related to the treatment of staff, as well as the safety of students. Unlike Montgomery College, who understands the fiscal climate we are in, so is not requesting additional funding over the FY25 budget, which can be supported and we advocate that it be, and is striving to be a visible solution to workforce development challenges we are currently facing.

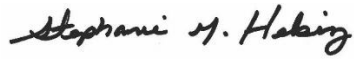
Just this past year, Montgomery County raised property taxes, recordation taxes, implemented rent control and passed legislation requiring electric-only building permits by next year. Business Energy Performance Standards regulations albeit passed by a prior council, place a new reporting and capital cost burden on large building owners, including houses of worship and condo associations. It is exhausting to list all the ways in which our county is burdening our business owners and citizens with fees and taxes, rather than building a bigger and more productive economy. Any of the proposed tax and fee increases, not only impact businesses' bottom line directly, but the ability of the community, who is also struggling, to continue to support local businesses. The requested tax increase and additional fees will further deter investment overall, disincentivize the workforce from considering Montgomery County as a viable option, and make it difficult for business owners and residents to continue to choose Montgomery County as a place to live and do business.

We don't envy your positions, but tough choices have to be made and there are other options on the table that allow each of you to fulfill your promises to your constituents and protect businesses and residents who already face affordability issues.

In conclusion, both the County and many private entities have made enormous investments in Silver Spring. The Chamber is supportive of funding priorities that enhance our overall quality of life and increase our ability for local businesses to be competitive. In a competitive and permissive environment, we will grow businesses, who, in turn, will support the entire community and their social agenda. We believe that the requests we offer in this letter will serve to protect those investments and help to assure a safe, secure, and vibrant future for Silver Spring.

Should you have questions, do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Helsing
President & CEO