

Good afternoon. My name is Lucila Castiglioni, and I live on Yellow Leaf Way, Germantown. I come before you today not just as a resident and an educator, but as a mother, a neighbor, and someone who loves this community deeply.

The proposed M-83 highway would run through the forest that backs our home. It's the same forest where my family walks nearly every day. It's where I mourned a miscarriage 4 years ago, surrounded by trees. It is where a few years later, I walked that same path, hand in hand with my toddler, expecting our second son. That forest is where we've grieved, grown, and healed. It is not just undeveloped land—it is part of our story.

But it's not only my story. I work with families at Gaithersburg Middle School, many of whom live in the very neighborhoods this project would affect—Germantown, Montgomery Village, and Gaithersburg. I see the real transportation crisis every day. Families miss work, school and doctor's appointments because it can take an hour or more to go four or five miles by bus. This is due to a lack of frequency and limited bus routes—not because we need another highway.

The M-83 would destroy one of the last green corridors we have and mostly benefit those who already have access to reliable transportation—those who can afford to drive. Meanwhile, families who depend on public transit are left with delays, detours, and disconnection. This is not progress. It's an investment in inequality.

We have a chance to make a better choice—one that reflects our values as a county. Instead of building a highway that divides communities and paves over our natural spaces, we should expand and improve our public transit system. We need more frequent, accessible bus routes that actually serve the people who need them most.

It was on a walk in Seneca Creek Park that I first saw a group of students learning about the M-83 project, and it hit me: if we don't speak up, we risk losing not just a forest, but a future rooted in equity and sustainability. That moment is why I'm here.

I urge you—please eliminate the proposed Midcounty Highway Extended northern section from the Master Plan of Highways and Transitways, as recommended by The Montgomery County Planning board on April 10, 2025. Let's invest in smarter, greener transportation solutions. Let's build a county that serves everyone—especially those who need it most.

Thank you.