

Below is a revised version of the testimony that incorporates your requested language seamlessly and strengthens the connection between personal impact and Council decision-making. It is written for formal submission but remains suitable for oral delivery with minimal edits.

Re: Testimony in Support of Respite Care Program
Special Appropriation – FY26

Dear Council President and Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed Special Appropriation of \$250,000 to the FY26 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program, and to explain why this funding is essential for families like mine. Today I am asking you to **approve the \$250,000 Special Appropriation for the FY26 Respite Care Program.** This funding will allow families like mine to access services without being placed on long waitlists or going without support.

I am the parent of a daughter with a complex disability. Because of the nature of her needs, our options for respite care and job training are extremely limited. Many programs are not equipped to support her safely or meaningfully, leaving families like ours with very few viable alternatives.

Respite funding has made a tangible difference in our lives and our adult. This year, it allowed us to secure specialized job training for my daughter—an opportunity that would not have been possible without this support. This training provides her with structure, skill development, meaningful work and dignity, while also giving our family much-needed relief from the constant demands of caregiving. It supports her growth and independence and helps sustain our ability to care for her at home. When she is out of school she has the opportunity to go to a job training program that is also considered respite for us caregivers. There are no programs like this through the State Sponsored program called DORS, because they are unable to find a program that provides one to one support.

The challenges of providing care 24 hours a day, seven days a week, the difficulty of accessing appropriate respite, and how even a few hours of relief can preserve a

family's stability, I want you to understand the real human impact of cutting funding. These are not abstract policy choices—they directly shape whether families can continue to function and my child can receive job training like other adults with disabilities.

For caregivers of individuals with complex disabilities, respite care is not a luxury or a convenience. It is a critical support that makes long-term caregiving sustainable. Without it, families face exhaustion, declining health, and increased risk of crisis. Cutting or reducing this funding would have immediate consequences for my family, including the loss of my daughter's job training opportunities and a significant increase in caregiver strain.

I urge the Council to approve this Special Appropriation and continue to prioritize respite care as an essential service for families caring for loved ones with disabilities, chronic medical needs, or age-related conditions. This funding prevents greater harm, supports stability, and affirms that Montgomery County values the well-being of its most vulnerable residents and the families who care for them.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your willingness to listen to the lived experiences of families in our community.

Respectfully,

Ann Robertson

Montgomery County Resident