

01/25/26

Dear Montgomery County Council:

### **Confidentiality and Respect for Privacy**

I am the mother of two children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), both of whom receive respite benefits from the Arc of Montgomery County. I wish to remain anonymous to protect my children's medical information, especially given today's political climate, where ASD diagnoses are increasingly scrutinized and could potentially be used against families or individuals who have received such diagnoses.

### **The Impact of Respite Care on Family Well-being**

Respite care has significantly benefited our family, improving both our physical and mental well-being. With the support of respite services, we can dedicate focused attention to each child, ensuring they receive the specialized care and support they need without feeling neglected or less important than their sibling. Respite care relieves pressure on our family and gives my husband and me the opportunity to pause, reflect, and respond thoughtfully during challenging moments, rather than reacting out of frustration or overwhelm due to our children's atypical behaviors. This support enables us to de-escalate tense situations and take necessary breaks, preventing pent-up emotions that could otherwise contribute to a stressful and unhealthy household for our children, which would ultimately exacerbate their behavioral challenges.

### **Supporting Parental Well-being and Partnership**

As busy parents constantly attending appointments, treatments, and consultations for our children's health and well-being, respite care gives us the chance to attend to our own needs. Whether that means going to the gym, running errands, or simply sharing a coffee date, these moments allow us to reconnect as partners and spouses—reminding us that we are more than just parents to two children with special needs.

### **The Critical Importance of Increased Funding**

Given the invaluable support respite services provide to families like ours, we strongly believe that increased funding for these programs in FY26 and beyond is essential. Additional funding will further support families under significant stress, especially in Montgomery County, where many have been affected by federal job loss, which impacts their health benefits. Furthermore, this funding could help provide well-deserved bonuses or raises to the dedicated and caring respite staff who have been so responsive, supportive, respectful, and kind to our family. Respite care has been a tremendous blessing to us, and we know that increased support will extend these benefits to many more families in need while also strengthening the respite workforce.

Thank you for your consideration. Be well.

Respectfully,

KLG, mother of EMC and MAC