

My name is Patti Lalley and I am lifelong resident of Silver Spring, Maryland. My family strongly supports the **Special Appropriation of \$250,000** to the FY26 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program. This funding is essential to sustaining the well-being of families who provide full-time care to loved ones with disabilities, chronic medical needs, or age-related conditions. For many of us, respite care is not an optional service—it is the only mechanism that allows us to continue caregiving safely, compassionately, and at home.

My mother is 90 years old and has lived with dementia for four years. She requires constant supervision and hands-on assistance with daily tasks. My father and I share her care between us. This arrangement means that one of us is always “on,” without a natural break to rest, recover, or attend to our own health. The four hours of respite care we receive each week are the only time we can step away from the unrelenting demands of dementia caregiving. Those hours allow us to regroup mentally and physically, maintain our own stability, and return to my mother's care with the patience and energy she deserves. Without this support, the strain would be overwhelming, and our ability to keep her safely at home would be jeopardized.

The proposed appropriation directly affects families like mine. Respite care is a cost-effective, preventive service that strengthens caregivers, reduces burnout, and delays or avoids the need for far more expensive institutional care. Losing our four hours a week would be devastating—not simply inconvenient, but destabilizing to my mother's well-being and to our capacity to continue providing the level of care she requires. Increased funding for FY26 and beyond is an investment in the health of caregivers like me, the dignity of older adults like my mother, and the stability of Montgomery County families who rely on this program to keep their loved ones at home.

For these reasons, **I respectfully urge the Council to approve the Special Appropriation and to continue expanding support for respite services in future budgets.** The impact of this program is immediate, measurable, and deeply personal for the families who depend on it. Your support ensures that caregivers are not left to shoulder these responsibilities alone and that vulnerable residents can remain in their homes, surrounded by the people who love them.

Thank you.