

My husband and I have been proud residents of Montgomery County since 1986. We raised our children in MCPS, where I later spent my career as a teacher. We have always felt fortunate to live in a community that values quality of life—a belief that was profoundly reinforced after my husband, Mike, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and Parkinsonism in 2018.

As Mike’s disease progressed, the demands of caregiving intensified. In 2024, I learned about the ARC respite benefit. I was stunned—and deeply grateful—that we qualified for this non-income-based support. Caregiving is emotionally and financially exhausting, and respite care has been essential to preserving quality of life for Mike, for me, and for our life together.

Through the respite program, a companion helps Mike exercise at local community centers, walk in our neighborhood, or do physical therapy at home. They often share a simple lunch afterward. The physical activity and social connection have been invaluable. Despite Mike’s significant dementia, he has formed genuine friendships with his companions—something that is increasingly rare and incredibly meaningful.

During this time, I am able to reclaim parts of my own life. I spend treasured time with my granddaughters, run errands, meet friends, hike, or attend a yoga class. These hours allow me, briefly, to step out of the constant role of caregiver and sustain my own health and well-being. This is not the retirement we planned, but it *is* a life with dignity and quality—made possible in no small part by ARC respite services.

Montgomery County is known for supporting its residents across all stages of life. I urge you to approve a **special appropriation of \$250,000 to the FY26 Operating Budget** for the Department of Health and Human Services’ Respite Care Program. As our population ages, more families will need this support. No one plans to need respite care—but when you do, it makes all the difference.

Your family could be next. Please ensure this vital service remains available.