

January 20, 2026

To: The Montgomery County Council

Re: Special Appropriation of \$250,000 to the FY26 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program

Dear Reader;

I would like to give you my personal perspective on caring for my husband at home, and how the ARC visiting aide program has been a lifeline to me. My husband, 80, and I, 73, live in Montgomery County, in our own home. We have no family in this area.

In November 2023, he suffered a series of health crises (ending with two hip replacements, three dislocations, kidney cancer, and numerous secondary problems) the low point of which was that he was not able to sit up in bed for more than 5 seconds at a time, could not walk or eat. After surgeries and time in three separate short-term facilities, I brought him home. I truly felt he would not survive otherwise. While in short-term rehab, he had contracted pneumonia, many deep bed wounds that took over a year to heal, and suffered mental trauma. He was totally bed ridden but I bought a hospital bed, and wheelchair and grab bars etc. so that he had a decent chance to get better. It has been a bumpy ride with many returns to the hospital, but we've seen progress.

At home I have been able to nurse him back to health. While I am not a nurse, I originally managed with Medicare's visiting PT persons. However, that funding ran out soon. I am alone by myself and while he has been making progress to the point where he can now slowly navigate with a walker, he is still dependent upon me for most functions (showers, dressing, pills, meals, housekeeping and laundry, wound dressing, appointment scheduling, etc.) But he no longer wears diapers, daily wound dressing changes, and his thinking is clearing up, and his BP is normal. Yet, his balance is precarious and any trip outside the house is infrequent and carefully planned.

While my health is good, this constant watching and monitoring is exhausting. I could absolutely not have managed thus far without the help of the Montgomery County ARC Respite care system. Thanks to the ARC, for two mornings a month, I am allowed to leave the house without worrying that something might happen: a fall, an accident, an unmet need. The aid visits, clears the dishes, watches my

husband while he walks, she changes the bed sheets on his bed, and makes lunch for him. These small but essential tasks give me time to get a coffee, go to the library, or do an errand, while not worrying constantly about his safety and well-being. I can fully relax for a few hours.

By providing me with emotional and physical support, I can continue to be his full-time caregiver while keeping my sanity and health. This, in turn, keeps both of us out of hospitals and assisted living, and allows us to be a part of our neighborhood, and as homeowners and contributing members of our community.

I urge you to continue a Special Appropriation of \$250,000 to the FY26 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program. I am but one example of the many families who operate as stand-alone care centers for fragile, elderly, sick and recovering family members. We are invisible, but working hard, 24 hours a day. It is only with the reliable, dependable help of the County that I could have the strength to make it through so far. I am sure all of you can relate to what I am saying in some aspect whether you have elderly parents or are aging yourself, wondering how people manage once illness strikes.

Thank you for your consideration of funding for this life-changing and important service for many County residents.

Sincerely,

Georgia Flaten Shaw (and Patrick Bennett Shaw)  
██████ Vorlich Lane, Bethesda MD 20816