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January 19th, 2026

Written Testimony in Support of FY26 Special Appropriation for the Montgomery County Respite Care Program (\$250,000)

Montgomery County Council Public Hearing – January 27, 2026

Submitted by: HomeCentris Healthcare – Gaithersburg Office

Dear Council President and Members of the Montgomery County Council,

I am writing to urge you to approve the proposed **\$250,000 special appropriation for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program**. Respite care is not a “nice-to-have.” It is one of the most practical, humane, and cost-effective supports this County can provide to families who are holding their loved ones and our community together.

Every day, Montgomery County’s unpaid family caregivers provide complex, emotionally taxing, and physically demanding care to older adults and individuals with chronic medical needs or disabilities. These caregivers are not just “helping out.” Many are managing medication routines, mobility and fall risks, dementia-related behaviors, toileting needs, meals, transportation, and the constant vigilance required to keep a loved one safe at home. Without relief, burnout is inevitable, and burnout often becomes a crisis: missed work, declining mental and physical health, unnecessary emergency room visits, or premature facility placement.

The County’s own materials make clear why this appropriation is urgent: the Respite Care Program provides families with up to 140 hours of respite per fiscal year, yet demand has outpaced available funding for multiple years. The program has maintained a waitlist, and it has repeatedly been forced to close to new participants after only 6–7 months of the fiscal year. As of December 2025, it closed to new applications due to insufficient funding. This appropriation would expand access by providing 7,575 additional respite hours, which is real time back for real families.

From the HomeCentris perspective, we see firsthand what happens when caregivers don’t have relief. Throughout Montgomery County, we provide over 6,000 hours of care to nearly 300 clients, and we employ nearly that same number of caregivers in Montgomery County. We support individuals who want to age in place with dignity, maintain independence, and remain



connected to their community. But family caregiver stability is a key part of that success. When family caregivers are stretched to their limit, care plans become fragile and vulnerable residents are at greater risk.

Respite funding helps in three critical ways:

1. **It keeps families stable and safe at home.** A small amount of scheduled relief can prevent a major breakdown in care.
2. **It strengthens the broader care system.** When families collapse under the burden, the consequences fall on hospitals, EMS, long-term care facilities, and already-strained community providers.
3. **It promotes equity.** Caregiving burden is not evenly distributed. Underserved communities often face added barriers, language access, transportation, financial strain, and limited informal support networks, making respite even more essential.

This \$250,000 investment is targeted, urgent, and aligned with the County's stated goal of protecting vulnerable residents. It is also a direct response to a documented shortage in access, one that the County has already acknowledged through closures and waitlists.

On behalf of the clients and families we serve across Montgomery County, I respectfully ask you to vote **YES** on the special appropriation for the Respite Care Program. Families doing the hardest work in our community should not have to reach a breaking point before help becomes available.

Thank you for your leadership and for prioritizing the well-being of Montgomery County residents.

Sincerely,

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