

January 19, 2026

**To:** Montgomery County Council

**Re:** Testimony on Special Appropriation to the FY26 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program

**Hearing Date:** January 27, 2026

**Submitted by:** Julie M. Dwyer of [REDACTED] Chevy Chase, MD 20815

**Position: Support**

---

My name is Julie Dwyer, and I am a Montgomery County resident and parent of a young adult with special needs. I am writing to urge the Council to approve the Special Appropriation of \$250,000 to the FY26 Operating Budget for the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program.

Respite funding has been critical to our family's mental health and well-being. Our son has high needs and requires supervision at all times. Due to the cost and limited availability of personal caregivers, we have no childcare. The respite program provides our only access to safe, high quality and affordable care for our son outside of the regular school day. Being able to count on some relief from the burdens of caregiving allows us to devote time to our other child and to recuperate so that we can engage fully with our special needs child.

Recent and impending cuts to public programs that support disabled individuals make Montgomery County's respite program all the more essential. Families like ours are acutely fearful about how we will support our children with special needs across their lifespan. Uncertainty about the future, particularly about the resources our child will require, makes it difficult for us to hire an expensive private caregiver to provide the relief our family needs now. The respite program eases this burden, and allows us to have brief, much needed breaks on a regular basis.

The activities available through the respite program have also been crucial to our son's development. With respite funds, our son has been able to attend a special needs sleepaway camp for the first time in his life. Prior to this, our son had never spent a night away from home. Being able to do so has opened new possibilities for him, leading to greater independence.

Please support this critical program upon which our family and many others rely.

I respectfully request that the Council approve the Special Appropriation to the Department of Health and Human Services' Respite Care Program.

Thank you.

Julie M. Dwyer