

Dear Council President Fani-Gonzalez and Councilmembers:

My name is Sasha, and I am a resident of Montgomery County and volunteer at Shepherd's Table. I would like to urge the Council to prioritize food access and invest in a stronger, more resilient food system in Montgomery County.

Food insecurity continues to rise across our County due to increasing food costs, economic instability, and uncertainty around federal nutrition programs. More families, seniors, and individuals are being forced to make impossible choices between paying for housing, healthcare, and food.

To meet this growing need, I respectfully urge the Council to:

- **Allocate an additional \$3.5 million to the Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR)** to stabilize and strengthen the County's food assistance network. Local providers are facing higher costs and increased demand, and without additional investment, they will struggle to keep up.
- **Support enhancements to the Food Systems Education grant**, which will expand training and technical assistance for residents and community organizations. These investments empower community-led solutions like gardening and local food production, building long-term resilience.
- **Reject proposed cuts to the Retail Food Access Program and Food as Medicine Grants.** These programs are essential for connecting residents to nutritious food through grocery assistance, health screenings, and targeted support. Reducing funding would mean fewer resources for those who need them most—at a time when demand is rising.

Food is a basic human need. Ensuring that all residents have access to healthy, affordable food is critical to the overall health, stability, and dignity of our community.

I urge the Council to fully fund these priorities and protect the programs that so many residents rely on every day.

Respectfully,

Sasha Kay