



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL**  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

**ROGER BERLINER**  
COUNCILMEMBER  
DISTRICT 1

**CHAIRMAN**  
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE  
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

May 17, 2018

**Statement of Montgomery County Councilmember Roger Berliner on the FY19 Operating Budget and FY19-24 Capital Improvements Program (CIP)**

Our budgets seek to balance the many, often competing needs and priorities of county residents while also reflecting current fiscal realities. The FY19 Operating Budget and FY19-24 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) approved today does that by holding the line on taxes, reigning in debt service for capital projects, and while taking important steps to ensure our county's long-standing AAA bond rating. At the same time, it also reflects a commitment to core government services such as education and public safety and includes important investments in school and transportation infrastructure.

One of my great joys of serving on this body for the last twelve years has been our relentless pursuit – in service to and on behalf of our constituents – to make Montgomery County a better place in which to live. It is a goal I believe we all share and one that I believe guides us every day. It is certainly the goal that has guided me. We have not always agreed as councilmembers or with our County Executive on precisely how to get there. Our fiscal reality means we could not provide everything I hoped we could include in this operating budget or this CIP, but during these budget deliberations we have made real progress in laying the groundwork for a prosperous, sustainable future for county residents. We have come together through this process to approve a budget that I believe is a credit to our county and that makes our county a better place to live for all residents.

Creating a better Montgomery County for everyone starts with education. In this budget, we have once again fully funded the Board of Education's request for Fiscal Year 2019 and have significantly increased funding above what the County Executive recommended for the school system's capital budget. MCPS enrollment continues to rise and this budget provides critical funding for school expansion, modernization, and construction projects. As a result of fully funding the Board of Education's operating budget request, recent class size reductions can be maintained and targeted efforts to eliminate the achievement gap augmented. Public school funding in this budget will expand dual-language immersion programs, add new career pathway programs for high school students, expand pre-kindergarten programs and services, and recognize the increasing demand for mental health services by increasing the number of counselors and psychologists.

Very few things are more basic responsibilities of government than providing for a safe and nurturing learning environment for our students. This budget provides for three additional School Resource Officers -- who serve as important liaisons between our students and the police department and help keep our kids, teachers and staff safe at school.

This budget has also made significant investments in strengthening our economy and promoting greater economic opportunity for all our residents. It funds essential efforts of our Montgomery County Economic

Development Corporation to attract and retain businesses and grow our tax base. It includes increased funding for work force development so that our residents have the training and tools they need for gainful employment and to ensure our county is poised to meet the employment needs of businesses who choose to call Montgomery County home. It funds incubator programs such as BioHealth Innovation to help grow the biohealth sector in the county and matching funds for small business innovation. This budget also provides essential support for Montgomery College, a nationally renowned community college and key partner in our county's work force development efforts.

In this budget, we have doubled down on our efforts to combat poverty and hunger, conditions that are holding too many of our residents back. Far too many of our children and their families are food insecure. I am pleased this budget provides funding to implement the "year two" recommendations of our county's *Food Security Plan*, including additional investments in the weekend bag program for students and funding for mini-grants for food recovery and distribution of important tools to help fight hunger.

Our county's nonprofits are a great asset to our community and are on the front lines combating hunger and providing a wide array of critical services to county residents. We provided a 2% cost of living increase to all nonprofit contractors so they have the necessary resources to keep up with increasing costs without reducing services. And for the developmentally disabled community, we made good on our county's pledge to continue providing a supplement critical to ensuring the hiring and retention of dedicated staff to work with this unique population. For our seniors, we funded an ombudsman to help seniors navigate the myriad of challenges aging often presents. Resources for transportation services, mental health services, and civic engagement opportunities for seniors were also included in this budget.

We made strides in affordable housing by investing an additional \$6 million for affordable housing acquisition and preservation, which will help efforts to build, obtain, and preserve badly needed affordable units. And we allocated funding for the creation of a homeless youth drop-in center, which will be of great service to one of our county's most vulnerable populations.

Creating a better Montgomery County for everyone means protecting our environment. This budget does that by funding a vacant position in the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Sustainability and to further efforts to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in the county. We did that within our Capital Budget by making the difficult but prudent decision not to cede responsibility for stormwater protection projects already in design. These projects restore our streams, protect our ecological resources, and ultimately help keep our drinking water clean. It is important that we ensure they are completed and that we retain our ability to apply a holistic approach -- including sufficient Green Infrastructure -- that satisfies our broader environmental objectives.

Creating a better Montgomery County for everyone means providing safe and efficient ways to get around for our residents. We have done this by providing funding for the hiring of a Vision Zero coordinator, so that we can accelerate progress on projects that will make our roads, sidewalks, and crosswalks safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as drivers. We added funding for the planning and design of Bus Rapid Transit service on Veirs Mill Road, New Hampshire Avenue, and the North Bethesda Transitway. And we added funding for new Metro entrances at the Forest Glen and White Flint stations. This budget also funds the purchase of land for a new Boyds MARC station transit center and accelerating protected bicycle lane projects around the county --including a new protected bicycle lane through downtown Bethesda to accommodate the temporary closure of the Georgetown Branch Trail.

We have put in place funding to start studying important transportation improvements promised in our master plans that will bring vibrancy to our communities including the conversion of Bethesda's one-way street network, making Norfolk Avenue into an attractive, pedestrian- and bike-friendly shared street, and exploring ways to slow down vehicles and protect pedestrians along residential streets such as Dale Drive in Silver Spring.

We have continued our strong commitment to the Purple Line by funding our county's share of the project, the new trail that will run alongside the light-rail and the new entrance adjoining the Bethesda Metro station on the red line that will allow riders to transfer easily between the two systems. And we have done all of this while maintaining our commitment to the basics -- new road connections to accommodate Clarksburg and the upcounty's rapid growth, preserving our county's street tree protection program, adding funding to our residential road resurfacing program, and the modernization of numerous traffic signals to alleviate wait times at busy intersections.

Among the most basic responsibilities of local government is safeguarding the quality of life of our residents. As many as 20,000 residents have been dealing with an extreme uptick in the frequency of airplanes on their way to or from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport flying over their neighborhoods – and at lower altitudes than ever before. We have added funding to this budget to hire an expert who will work with the Federal Aviation Administration to adjust the airplane flight paths and procedures that have brought unbearable noise and disruption to many of our communities. With limited options for dealing with the FAA in other forums, funding this position is critical to our efforts to fend off changes unfairly hoisted upon our residents without warning.

The Council also added additional funding for our Parks Department which provides for and maintains coveted hundreds of parks, trails and public spaces enjoyed by residents, young and old. The FY 19 budget provides funding for land acquisition, environmental stewardship, park expansions, and activation of our urban parks.

And last but not least, this budget restores \$6.6 million to the County Executive's budget for fire and rescue services to improve response times and ensure sufficient staffing levels for all parts of our county.

The budget process is demanding work, but by focusing on core government services and the quality of life of our residents, I believe the Council has crafted a fiscally responsible budget that will continue to make our county an extraordinary place to live.