



COMMISSION ON AGING

April 30, 2021

Honorable Sidney Katz
Montgomery County Council

I wanted to thank you for meeting with our Commissioners – Wayne Berman, Neal Brown, and Katie Smith, on April 23, 2021. I heard it was a robust discussion on issues of importance to the Commission on Aging. I also understand the problem of accessing information on affordable housing was discussed when using the County's 311 and 7-3000 phone services. You asked about the details of our informal inquiry of these services to access information on affordable housing. Below is the scenario and results of one Commissioner's testing of the phones services.

On March 3, I called 311 and was referred to Aging and Disability Services (ADS). My scenario was to play the part of a 72-year-old male currently renting a condo for a low cost from a friend. The condo is going to be sold and this person must be out of the condo in 2 months. His income is \$1200/month (Social Security) and he can't find any affordable housing. He is already on the HOC wait list.

The woman who answered the 311 phone said, "We have no affordable housing in Montgomery County, it's a problem." When I called ADS at 240-777-3000, I got the same answer from a different operator.

This is exactly as we feared... each operator even mentioned there are no county case managers to help with this problem. If this person was at risk, the operator could have called Adult Protective Services (APS), or he could be directed to call the Crisis Center to see if they could put him in a shelter or a temporary hotel.

The answers provided on the 311 and 7-3000 numbers test point to the larger issue of the need for preserving the County's existing affordable rental units. DHCA's roll-out of its Housing Marketplace will improve access to existing units but the County's efforts to fund both the preservation and new development continue to be critical to meet the challenges we face in providing residents with affordable and accessible housing. Supporting the funding of the County Executive's new Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund within the HIF will benefit the County's continually growing older population.

We hope that it is useful to you in upcoming committee hearings, as you and the Council work to make the "311" and "7-3000" phone services more effective. Thank you again for the opportunity to meet with you. We look forward to an ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

Barbara Selter sb

Barbara Selter, Chair
Montgomery County Commission on Aging