



MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Luisa Montero-Diaz
Mid-County RSC Director

April 22, 2016

The Honorable President Nancy Floreen
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Operating Budget, FY17

Dear Council President Floreen:

The Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) welcomes the opportunity to share our observations about County Executive Leggett's Recommended FY17 Operating Budget. Our Board adopted these positions at our April Meeting, based on discussion and input gathered from the entire Board.

General Observations

We must acknowledge that our point of view does not encompass the whole range of County government functions encompassed in the Budget, but must focus on those functions that we identify as impacting our community directly. We do understand and appreciate that your task, as that of the County Executive's, is much broader than that.

We do want to state that we support the expenditures in the Recommended Budget while acknowledging that it requires a substantial increase in the property tax rate for the County, even with the deferral of the costs of the Wynne Decision. We recognize that the County Executive and the Council have had to make unpleasant budget decisions since the Recession, even while being aware of increased need for County services and seeing the effects of cut backs.

It is time to reverse that trend and we welcome the positive changes included in this Budget as a means to address needs in a meaningful way.

Support Items

We have identified several specific funding categories from the Budget as support items to bring to your attention: MCPS, School Based Health and Wellness Centers, Linkages to Learning, Police Body Cameras, Positive Youth Development Budget Section, and Libraries.

-MCPS

In our FY16 Operating Budget letter, we shared concerns about the increase in MCPS enrollment without a corresponding increase in funding. We are pleased to see that the County Executive has recommended a substantial increase in funding for MCPS and we support this increase. We also strongly support the County Council in requiring a commitment from MCPS that the additional funds

will go to the specific services that are most important for the County right now, including reduced class size, closing the achievement gap, and adding support personnel, while acknowledging that \$76 million of the increase will go to fund negotiated agreements for staff.

-School Based Health and Wellness Centers

-Linkages to Learning

Should the County Council approve the Recommended Budget as it stands, we ask you to consider the further strain on other County programs impacted by the deficit between the BOE request and the budgeted amount. We urge the County Council to consider the interconnected roles that these above listed services, as well as those of Montgomery County Libraries and Montgomery County Police, provide to MCPS and to provide adequate funding to them as well.

-Police Body Cameras

We support the funding for police body cameras, knowing their limitations in understanding events. We note that the long term storage, access and data service will generate additional, long term costs.

-Positive Youth Development

We support several items in this budget section as a commitment to both public safety and youth interaction. We recognize the importance of funding for Centralized Gang Task Force, funding for a school Resource Officer for each high school, expanding Excell Beyond the Bell Program to two additional Middle Schools, and funding a Community Service Officer for each of the 6 Police Districts.

-Libraries

We acknowledge and support the increased funding for the Library system since it functions in multiple ways to provide access to information, technical services, and programs that widely benefit the entire County. We expect to see the scheduled Library Refreshment project at the Aspen Hill Library completed in calendar year 2016. We note the necessary and welcomed funding for the interim library setting at the Wheaton Rescue Squad, while the Wheaton Library is being re-built.

Conclusion

The members of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board thank you for considering our comments as you go through the process that will result in the Adopted FY17 Operating Budget for the County. We appreciate the difficulty of your task that must weigh identified needs against the ability to fund them.

Sincerely,



Francisco Romero
Vice-Chair
Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board

cc: Council Members: cc: County Executive
 Roger Berliner Isiah Leggett
 Marc Elrich
 Tom Hucker
 Sidney Katz
 George Leventhal
 Nancy Navarro
 Craig Rice
 Hans Riemer