



Testimony from Montgomery County Young Democrats on the Montgomery County 2021 Budget

April 16, 2020

Council President Katz, members of the County Council,

Thank you for receiving our testimony. My name is Michael DeLong and I am the President of the Montgomery County Young Democrats. As an organization we strive to make Montgomery County a better place to live by promoting freedom, opportunity, and justice for all.

On behalf of MCYD, I am here to respectfully provide recommendations for County Executive Elrich's proposed operating budget for 2021. MCYD applauds the 47.2% allocation of the \$5.9 billion dollar budget to our county's public schools. Additionally we support the continued funding efforts for public safety, health and human services, county government, transportation, higher education, libraries, and environmental protection. That said, due to the coronavirus crisis millions are suffering economic hardship while thousands are sick. It is all the more crucial that the Council continue to support underserved communities in the county.

We have several proposals that we hope you will consider:

1. Relief for renters in Montgomery County. We thank the Council for passing the badly needed \$36.5 million relief package of grants and funding for health and human services to help low income residents. But it is not enough. Renters are disproportionately losing their jobs and having their hours cut, and many are unable to make ends meet. And evicting people in the middle of a pandemic is cruel and harmful to everyone.

Just last week the D.C. Council passed a relief bill that froze rents across the District, to cushion the blow of the coronavirus. We urge this Council to pass a similar rent freeze or take additional action to help renters.

2. Additional emergency funding to help county residents with payments for housing, health care, and other expenses. This crisis is deepening and the County Council must be prepared for a long term commitment. Again, we appreciate the \$5 million in funding already passed, but that alone is not enough. People, especially low-income earners, will need help even after they can return to work, and they should not face economic ruin due to this public health crisis. Nonprofits and small businesses will also need additional help. The Council should allocate additional funding for this relief fund.
3. Ensure that all testing and treatment for the coronavirus is free and available to everyone. Testing, quarantines, and health care are essential to defeating the virus, saving lives, and ensuring that everything gets back to normal. But if people are unable to get health care because they cannot afford it, they are less likely to be tested and given help. Right now Maryland covers testing for uninsured people but not treatment. Treatment for the coronavirus should be free-it is the moral and practical thing to do.
4. Finally, the budget should include help for our health care workers and other essential workers, who are risking their lives on the front lines every day. A disproportionate number of grocery store workers have contracted and died from the virus. The county should acquire personal protective equipment-masks, gloves, and other items-to help safeguard workers against the coronavirus, and help them in other ways. For example, additional reimbursements could be created to cover childcare for the children of doctors, nurses, and other front line workers. We applaud the County for their work in this area, but the current reimbursement will not cover all the costs of childcare.

Thank you again for hearing our testimony. Please reach out to us at mocoyoungdems@gmail.com or 925-708-1135 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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