

February 1, 2022

Dear County Council President Gabe Albornoz:

The Justice and Advocacy (J&A) Council of Montgomery County is composed of Roman Catholics throughout the county who are working to promote social justice. We would like to comment on select portions of the recently released Recommended FY23 Capital Budget and Recommended FY23-28 Capital Improvement Program.

- We were encouraged to see an emphasis on affordable housing projects and were particularly glad to see the new *Affordable Living Quarters project*, which is designed to provide permanent, affordable housing to very low-income households in the County. While the initial funding is for planning purposes only, we look forward to seeing this project progress and learning how many households it will be able to assist, as the need for this type of housing is at a critical level.
- Mental health/substance abuse services have long been inadequate for the need and difficult to access, especially for low-income residents and residents of color. We approve of and applaud the funding of the new *Restoration Center*, which will prevent inappropriate and unnecessary incarceration and provide much needed services for those with mental health and substance abuse challenges.
- The pandemic only reinforced the need for increased support for *Early Care and Education*. We support these efforts including: the funding for a new Early Childhood Center to provide a permanent home for prekindergarten literacy, mathematics, and social/emotional skill development services; planning funds to further expand early childhood centers throughout the County; and funding for both a School-based Health Center and a Linkages to Learning Center at JoAnn Leleck Elementary School.

We thank the members of the County Council for their dedication to helping those in most need in our County, and we look forward to working with you in 2022.

Sincerely,

Larry Couch and Mary M. Bennett  
Co-Chairs  
Justice and Advocacy Council of Montgomery County