

February 12, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my understanding that on January 15, 2022, our County Executive released a recommended Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget that cuts \$19.4 million, or 7.3 percent, from the request that the Parks Department deemed the minimum to adequately support our parks. The cuts are insane at a time when more and more people are visiting our parks to relieve stress and connect with nature as a way of coping with the COVID pandemic.

I live in the Kemp Mill area of Montgomery County and visit Brookside Gardens and other parks daily to walk my dogs, and go biking and geocaching. As a child we played on the playground equipment and the wing of the plane, and petted animals at Old McDonald's Farm. I have enjoyed the "Garden of Lights" display, as well as many adult education classes sponsored by Brookside Gardens horticulturists. I volunteer as a Master Gardener, meeting with residents who have gardening questions during our twice weekly "Plant Clinics." I look forward to returning to the butterfly house as a visitor and Master Gardener volunteer. I also play softball at Wheaton Regional Park on a women's over 40 team. Brookside, Wheaton Regional, and many other parks across the county are very important to me, my family, my friends, and the residents of my community.

Many of the down-county parks are quite old and in need of extra maintenance and upgrade. I participated in zoom sessions this fall with park officials gathering ideas for the upgrades to Wheaton Regional, the stables, and Brookside Gardens. Buildings, parking lots, picnic areas, recreational equipment, and trails all need to be maintained to ensure safe participation for all residents. At Brookside Gardens, money is needed make all areas ADA compliant, update the rose garden, and begin to plan for a new Conservatory to replace the 65+ year old building. I really feel that these upgrades are necessary for the continued growth and enjoyment of Brookside Gardens by people worldwide. Now is not the time to kick the can down the road. It is the time to pick-up the can and recycle it to preserve our environment. I urge you to fully fund the CIP for Montgomery Parks.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Linda Barrett  
Silver Spring, MD 20902