

## **2-MINUTE ORAL TESTIMONY**

Thank you - My name is Doris Nguyen and I am speaking today on behalf of the Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Coalition, and also wanted to let you know we endorse Sylvia Tognetti's testimony today on adaptation and sequestration.

We support the County Executive's FY23 budget and applaud the focus on funding equitable and vital climate priorities to address the current climate emergency. I would like to remind the Council that every Montgomery County resident will eventually be impacted by Climate Change and some have already been impacted. The youth of today for which we fight to provide the best education will have climate change overwhelm their future no matter their education. The many needs we have been hearing about tonight from the many speakers will be amplified with climate change. So this budget is a step forward although not sufficient to the CAP Goals.

**There are specific areas where we believe the County Council can strengthen this otherwise laudable budget, specifically related to:**

1. **Accelerate investment to expand generation and use of renewable energy.** The three FTE in the Non Departmental Account are essential for focusing on EV adoption, an electric charging strategy, clean energy development, implementing Community Choice Energy, and other items. **Given the appropriate breadth of this ambition, we recommend this be raised to 5 FTE, not just 3, to make real headway;**
2. **Add funding for evaluating the budget against the County's greenhouse gas reduction goals.** There is no way to tell whether our investments track a critical path to meeting the CAP goals. Related to this, the budget for the Office of Legislative Oversight is flat and does not consider the added work we expect when you pass the Climate Assessment Bill. Therefore, **we strongly recommend adding an FTE to support OLO and DEP for performance measurement.**
3. **Increase funding levels for incentives for residential retrofits as well as set-asides for low and moderate income household;** and
4. **In the study on flooding, we would like to see funds added to include home flooding due to overland runoff.**

Montgomery County has an opportunity to be a national leader in fighting climate change and meeting climate goals; we urge passage of an equally ambitious budget that meets our climate challenges. Thank you.

## **WRITTEN TESTIMONY LONG FORM**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the County Executives FY23 operating budget. I am speaking today on behalf of the Climate Action Plan Coalition.

We support the budget overall, including and especially the increase in FTE. There are a couple areas where we have concerns and recommendations, in our view, the strengths of this budget include:

**With regard to adaptation and resilience**, we are more than pleased to see that the County departments have responded to our priorities. We strongly support:

- Staff and funds to address flooding, including a study on flooding, and we are very pleased that the new hydrologist funded last year has been hired.
- GIS and mapping, especially the inclusion of trees and forests.
- Increased investment in trees and forests, RainScapes and natural infrastructure.
- Attention to our degrading stormwater infrastructure
  
- Funds for equity projects especially for inclusion and co-creation
- Investment in agricultural business development, ag practices and composting. (We note the study with UMD on growing crops under solar panels – and we plan to follow this with great interest.)

While speaking as the CAP Coalition and not representing the BIPOC community, it is our perception that the County is working diligently to address racial equity and social justice, and the racial equity tool being used by the County appears to effectively aid development of this budget. We support, in particular, the funding for co-creation programs and for setting aside funds for low- and moderate-income (LMI) homes for retrofits, although we would like to see more funds for LMI retrofits.

As an aside, we note that there is still work to be done to increase the fee for replacing trees (which is only \$250 per tree versus the real cost of almost \$500.00) and for stormwater waivers which are similarly underpriced compared to the County's cost for replanting trees and mitigating stormwater.

We also are pleased to see attention to our stormwater infrastructure, including the study on flooding. However, it is our understanding this study does not include home flooding due to overland runoff and would like to see funds added to include that in the study.

**And we support the investments for reducing greenhouse gasses**, including:

- Conversion to zero emission buses, funding RideOn and BRT, and reducing vehicle miles traveled.
- Funds to incentivize electrifying existing homes (although it is highly likely that this is severely underfunded, and we would like to see this increase as the program stands up.)
- Staff and funds to implement BEPS
- Staff to amend the energy code
- The three FTE in the NDA account – these are essential – including focus on EV adoption and developing an electric charging strategy, clean energy development,

communications, implementing Community Choice Energy, urban heat island mapping, etc. **However**, given the breadth of ambition, we recommend this be raised to 5 FTE, not just 3.

We are also pleased to see **FTE and funding for program management**, including:

- A new FTE for funding and performance measurement
- Investment in a broadscale communication campaign, which is sorely needed to elevate visibility and attention to climate change throughout County residents

Beyond our very positive reaction to the budget's attention to adaptation, resilience, and equity, and in addition to investments in reducing GHGs, we remain very concerned about mitigation of greenhouse gasses. There are many great things in the budget, such as staff and funding for implementing BEPS, staff to work on energy codes, increasing energy efficiency in homes, incentivizing retrofits, continuing work on benchmarking, and planned installations of solar on county properties.

There are two aspects of the budget that we are concerned about.

First, it is unclear what the County is doing to expand generation and use of renewable energy, and it doesn't appear to have enough investment in this area. Adding the two FTE mentioned above to the NDA account should help in this area.

Second, what we still do not see is any way to evaluate this budget against the County's greenhouse gas reduction goals. The Climate Action Plan very clearly lays out charts for how much reduction is needed in each sector. But there is no way to tell whether our investments track a critical path to meeting our goals. Yes, we agree, everything in the budget is important – but is it enough? Is it even **close** enough? Given the climate emergency, if the County is serious about being a leader in this field, we need to know where more investment is needed.

This is not to criticize County staff who are working EXTREMELY hard. They have been nothing but cooperative in communicating with us and responding to our inquiries, and they are working creatively to build capacity and to stand up new programs. We know that it is difficult to rise to this huge challenge. But without even a rough estimate of how our investments track to our goals, how will you, our Council members, know if we need to accelerate investments?

We also note that the FY23 budget for OLO is essentially flat and does not consider the added work we expect of them when you pass the Climate Assessment Bill this year.

In order to finally build the capability for the County to effectively track greenhouse gas mitigation to inform strategic programmatic activities and legislative priorities, we strongly recommend that the one additional FTE earmarked for performance monitoring and assessment be added to support both OLO and DEP. Much as the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice created a tool for assessing budget, the County needs a tool for evaluating GHGs

in departmental programs. This will be especially important once the Council passes the Climate Assessment Bill.

If you'll bear with me, we note three other issues.

1. Council should ensure that MCPS is aggressively addressing climate change.
2. Land use is a huge driver of climate change – it is essential that you pass the Climate Assessment Bill that includes MNCPPC's assessment for master plans.
3. It is likely that we will need more investment in resilience hubs.

**In summary, we urge you to adopt this budget with the following key additions:**

- **2 FTE for planning and development of renewables**
- **1 FTE for performance measurement**
- **Increase funding levels for incentives for residential retrofits as well as set-asides for low and moderate income household**
- **Increase funding for the flooding study to include home flooding due to overland runoff**

Thank you.