

Testimony by Sonja Roberts, Chair, Montgomery County Library Board,
April 20, 2022

Council President Hucker and members of the Council: I am Sonja Roberts, Chair of the Montgomery County Library Board.

We ask that the Council support the Executive's budget recommendations for Fiscal Year 2023 for Montgomery County Public Libraries. After two years of the pandemic, MCPL will use these resources to rebuild and to reach out.

The biggest rebuild involves staffing, with a vacancy rate over 20%. With these resources, MCPL's leadership expects to have branch-level vacancies resolved early next Fiscal Year, and management level vacancies a bit later.

We also ask the Council to review the County's personnel procedures—perhaps some adjustments can alleviate these shortages more quickly.

We were disappointed that the Executive did not approve MCPL's request for \$320,000 to strengthen the Spanish and Chinese language collections. Our Latino and Chinese populations are growing; we ask that the Council add these funds.

We see this initiative as part of the larger outreach effort the MCPL is undertaking in response to needs the pandemic revealed. For instance, we now know how important MCPL computers and Wi-Fi networks are to many of our residents. This led to enhanced Wi-Fi access in the parking lots and underlined the urgency of reopening as the terminals in the branches are vital to many.

With generous support from the Council over the last two difficult years, our library workers and leadership have found innovative ways to keep our libraries' resources and programs available to all our residents.

These dedicated public servants are now ready to rebuild and reach out.
Please give them the resources to do so.

Thank you,