

Testimony in support of the Council's APPROVAL of the Montgomery County
Parks Department **FULL OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST.**

During the past two years of the COVID-19 lock down Montgomery Parks have been a life saver for thousands of residents to safely get outside and enjoy fresh air, sunshine and nature while still social distancing. Many residents have discovered or rediscovered the great variety of trails, community gardens, athletic fields and historic sites the parks have to offer. The parks have **provided physical and mental health** to Montgomery County residents and add to the high standard of living that we have in the county. For example, my friends and I explored the variety of trails at Cabin John Park during most of the shutdown; delighted in the mass of tulips at Brookside in the spring; discovered the Agricultural Reserve and enjoyed the sunflower fields in the fall; were amazed at the Brookside Garden of Lights during the Holidays and are thrilled by the Josiah Hanson museum and other proposed historic and cultural programs focusing on the untold stories of our African American, Asian, Native American, and Latino communities.

The County Executive's proposed budget includes \$124.9 million for Montgomery Parks, representing less than 2% of the total county operating budget; unfortunately, the County Executive reduced Montgomery Parks request by \$1.7 million. Sadly, the high quality of living described above will be negatively affected by this short-sighted action. As a senior, I am thrilled to have so many options for healthy walking and historical enrichment in the natural beauty we have in Montgomery County. Approval of the Parks Department **FULL OPERATING BUDGET REQUEST** is a small price to pay to continue to attract business investment, expand the diversity of the community and enhance senior retirement to Montgomery County.