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## JUFJ's FY23 Budget Letter to the County Council

We at Jews United for Justice (JUFJ) have testified in the past about the need for a moral budget, one that provides all residents with *dei machsoro*, resources enough for each person's needs. JUFJ is closed next week for the week of Passover, and therefore we will be unable to testify during the budget hearings, so we wanted to take this opportunity to share our thoughts about the proposed FY23 budget.

The holiday of Passover celebrates liberation from oppression, and features a series of terrible plagues that afflicted the Egyptians. Today we are compelled to express our alarm at some of the modern plagues affecting the most vulnerable residents of Montgomery County: the literal plague of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to disproportionately impact our County's Black and Latinx communities; the plague of uncertainty and fear surrounding the end of the rent stabilization bill; the plague of rising costs and limited resources afflicting nonprofit agencies already stretched thin; the plague of criminalizing student behavior instead of providing desperately needed mental health supports; and the plague of expanding the role of policing into roles for which law enforcement officers have neither the skills nor the training to succeed.

We urge you to extend the emergency rent stabilization bill (Bill 30-21E) before it expires, so that the County's safety net is not overwhelmed by thousands of newly homeless and displaced families.

We ask that you universally increase nonprofit funding by an additional 4% over the County Executive's budget, for a total of 10%, to reflect the additional work our County's nonprofits have assumed since the start of the pandemic — as all costs continue to rise.

We urge you to prioritize increasing nonprofit funding, while at the same time **not** funding MCPD's proposed Community Resource Bureau which, once created, will expand police authority into work outside of their expertise and mission at unprecedented levels.

Data proves that holistic public safety comes not from investments in policing and surveillance, but from investments in mental health, housing stability, and broad supports for students.

We will share a more detailed statement about the budget after Passover. In the meantime, we ask you to listen closely to the budget testimony of our partners at CASA, MORE Network, Nonprofit Montgomery, Silver Spring Justice Coalition, Racial Justice NOW!, and Young People for Progress. Substantive investments in housing, safety net services, and mental health supports – and not an expansion of the role of police – will bring our community closer to one where everyone has *dei machsoro*, the resources necessary to survive and thrive. Thank you.