

Testimony for FY23 Operating Budget
Enku Taye
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My respected regards to all County Council Members, and to all CAI team,

I would like to give my voice for homestay mothers of color to be supported more.

According to National Association of Mental Illness, twenty five billions of Individuals in United States are living with major mental depression. Most Immigrant home stay mothers of color who are living in Takoma Park, and Silver Spring are leading a depressed life due to lack of resource awareness, and limited available resources.

My life experience can be a good testimony for this situation. I am living in Montgomery county, Takoma Park city for twelve years so far. When I came to U.S., I started my life journey by being a home stay mother. I gave birth for three handsome boys in a consecutive years. I supposed to take care of them while my husband was intended to generate income for the whole house hold expenses. It is a struggling life to achieve the house chores, to take care of kids' activities in and outside home, etc... in a 24/7 base until the children are ready for school. This repeated life, and lack of self-quality time put me into depression.

Because I can't cover a day care cost, or to hire a babysitter, still or I have no other family member to give me a little support, my mind was only active to engage in the day to day of the house routine in a yearly base. I was confused how to progress forward and where to start. Lately, after seven years, I hardly found information about the nearby TESS center, and they support me with the Child Care Scholarship program application. Hence, I was able to go out for a college study. However after a year, I decided to quit my studies because I was not satisfied in my grade. I couldn't use all my potential to study and to research on a given assignments when I get back home after learning hours. The Child Care Scholarship program calculated the time amount only for a class hours, back and forth of traveling time to a college and to home. So, I decided to fully focus on my children's development, and house routine responsibilities.

Though I was glad with my dedication to my children's life, internally I was leading unhappy life especially when I think about my career dreams. Lately, the deep depression exposed me to have poor health like Obesity, migraine, lack of interest, malnutrition, high stress, etc... Whenever I get a chance to talk to other mothers of color at a playground or in a store, most of them are having the same feeling I have. For example, from ten of them, seven are living with depression. Some of them even have more difficult situation in their daily life because they have autistic child/children, and due to their own personal health condition too. This situation needs to be considered at different level of agencies for a better living system in the immigrant society specially.

Personally, I suggest the following solutions which can greatly bring a change among the local home stay mothers of color.

- 1) Income based day care in a nearby of Maple Avenue. (High demand)
- 2) Provide additional funding for scholarships, child care subsidies, and other financial assistance so that adult learners will have the resources needed to complete their education.
- 3) Resource centers should highly engage among communities of color to introduce their services at large. Offices like TESS center, Mary center, Gilchrist center, Workforce Montgomery, etc...should reach out immigrant society for resource awareness.
- 4) Free recreation programs for home stay mothers with a child care, and transport service. For example, Zumba class, swimming class, city tour, nature walk, etc... (To boost up their mental and physical health).

Currently, under a non-profit organization, I organized a group of home stay mothers of color for moral support, for sharing life experiences as well as for sharing resources. In this group of twenty six people, some of them are empowered and started to lead life positively, and able to progress in their personal and moral development. In the meantime, almost all of the participants are claiming for the need of an income based day care in a walking distance with no waiting list.

On the other hand, I believe there are a number of mothers and guardians of color who are not connected with resources at large, and who are leading a hard life in their

day to day life. This is because some of them are less socializing, the others have language barrier that holds them to search for a resource, still some of them may not have the skill to use technology, and still some of them may not have a quality time to find resources. Most mothers of color are spending a minimum of three to five years at home until their children get ready for school. And if this situation is not their preference, they will easily exposed to a mental and physical sickness.

I am willing and interested to give my time to bring a valuable change among a community of color based on their basic needs and available resources from different agencies in Montgomery County.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Enku Taye