

Joan Entmacher

April 5, 2022

Re: Operating Budget of the Parks Department

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing to urge you to **reject the \$1.7 million cut** to the operating budget of the Parks Department proposed by the County Executive.

I've lived in Montgomery County for nearly 30 years, and have long valued its extensive and varied parks as one of the key amenities of the county. During the pandemic, they have become a vital support to the mental and physical health of my family, my neighbors, and the many residents I see enjoying the parks every day.

The proposed cuts to the Parks Department's operating budget could jeopardize the accessibility, safety, and beauty of the parks. The operating budget supports the skilled employees who keep trails and playing fields accessible and safe by preventing stream erosion, cutting down dead trees, and improving drainage--often by creating naturalized areas adjacent to trails that simultaneously foster native plants and wildlife. It enables upgrades to equipment and surfaces in playgrounds and exercise areas enjoyed by residents of all ages. And it maintains and enhances the beauty of Brookside Gardens--a true jewel--and the county's other gardens. Important initiatives to improve access and expand historic and cultural programs that reflect the full diversity of the county's residents would not be funded under the County Executive's reduced budget.

I appreciate that the Council must decide among important competing priorities. But the cost of providing full funding to the Parks Department is small, and the returns to the quality of life of the county's residents would be great.

Sincerely,

Joan Entmacher