

11/15/22

To the Montgomery County Council:

I am a Silver Spring resident working with the Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network since late April of this year, and have been hosting migrants in my home since May 2022. In this capacity, I can say with absolute certainty that people are staying in Montgomery County long term.

I am thrilled that Montgomery County Council Special Appropriation #23-17 has been introduced to support the arriving migrants. However, I want to emphasize the need for long term solutions for the security of our arriving neighbors. People are building their lives here, and given the innumerable barriers placed before them by our immigration policy, lack of social security numbers, and lack of government IDs, they need long term support that is tailored to their needs.

Our new neighbors need food security, such as being made eligible for SNAP. They need housing security, as finding an apartment without a credit history or paystub history is incredibly difficult even if they can afford it - housing vouchers, down payments, emergency assistance, and rent relief need to be made available to them. They need support for obtaining new identification cards such as through CASA Maryland, as their identification documents are taken from them at the border. They need direct cash assistance with a waiver for government ID, or accepting their immigration documents. They need legal assistance for their immigration cases. They need childcare vouchers so their mothers may work. They need access to food rescues and shelters without showing government IDs, which they don't have. Those that are LGBTQIA+ need access to LGBT safe housing. And they need language interpretation for all of these. All of these services are needed down county as well as up county, as people are settling in a variety of places. They also need to be accessible to people who may not have gotten involved with any one particular non-profit.

I have been seeing the frustration of our migrant neighbors up close through the families I'm hosting. At every turn, they're blocked by a program that requires a social security number, or a US ID, or needing a referral from a program which they can't get.

700-800 new migrants have settled into the Washington DC metro region that we know of. These people need our help long term, and we are in a position to do so.

Thank you for your time,
Mara Levy