

Montgomery County Council Hearing – Supplemental Appropriation to the County Government’s FY23 Operating Budget, Institute for Health Computing Non-Departmental Account, \$15,000,000.

November 29, 2022

Testimony of Melissa McKenna

Good afternoon. My name is Melissa McKenna.

“A goal without a plan is just a dream.” –Dave Ramsey

I recently completed a 10-week business creation class from the Maryland Innovation Center in Howard County. Fantastic Program! We could use one here in Montgomery County.

Having been immersed in creating a business model canvas, estimating realistic startup costs, doing market research, creating financial documents and future forecasts for investors, my first thoughts about this Supplemental Appropriation were: “Where’s the business plan? Where’s the market research? Why this site?”

- The business “plan” is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with aspirational language.
- The market research was released last night by the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice. Although thorough, why not an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review?
- As for site location, why White Flint?

Montgomery County likes Public-Private Partnerships, where’s the private investment?

During the Joint Delegation Priorities hearing on November 15, 2022, State Senator Susan Lee specifically asked why no private investment was being sought. Seems she too is skeptical of the relying on additional funds from the state.

I believe there are several companies already in the county–AstraZeneca, United Therapeutics, Novavax... (no endorsement implied) that could be financially supportive. There’s also another higher education provider in the County: Johns Hopkins.

From agenda packet circle 14, Concrete Project Goals at the bottom of the list for years 1-2,

7. Assess the existing and potential partnerships with NIH, NIST AHRQ, FDA, and other federal agencies.

Seems to me we are putting the cart in front of the horse. Research should be done with private investors first.

I have more than a few concerns about this last minute supplemental appropriation. Chiefly they are:

1. Expenditures for an operating budget request are actually largely capital expenses. That’s accounting 101. The list on circle 17 even says “Capital Expenditures.”
2. The lease and ongoing operating expenses encumber a future council, of whom only 5 of those 11 members are here today. Also, 5 years is longer than the term of office for that next council.
3. Is this really the role of County government? To fund a research institution.

From the Montgomery County Open Budget website:

The mission of the Montgomery County Government is to provide for the peace, good governance, health, safety, and welfare of the County in accordance with, and under authority of, the Constitution and laws of Maryland, and the Montgomery County Charter. To accomplish this mission, the Montgomery County Government provides: Public laws and oversight through the County Council and the offices and boards of the Legislative Branch; the administration of

judicial offices; and public programs, services, and infrastructure through the County Executive and departments, offices, boards, and commissions within the Executive Branch.

As described by the Maryland Department of Legislative Services:

"Counties are the primary unit of local government responsible for most basic services such as police, fire, local corrections, sanitation, local highways, health, and parks and recreation. Counties also are responsible for funding public schools, libraries, local community colleges, and the circuit courts."

From Agenda Packet Circle 20. 1- How will this effort support racial equity and social justice?

The biggest potential impact on racial equity and social justice from this partnership is the opportunity to support a significant step forward in closing the health outcome disparities suffered by under-represented minorities in the County, the State, and across the country.

To me, a better, direct investment to impact health outcome disparities would be:

- Access to healthy food
- Access to preventative health care
- Prenatal care
- Having health care professionals listen to what their patients say is wrong

All the data analytics and predictive, adaptive clinical trials are useless if patients can't access care.

To recap: Where's the research?
 Where's the private investment?
 Capital expenses should not be operating expenses.
 Where's the financial impact analysis?
 All done at the speed of light with no PHED Committee or GO Committee input
 AND
 With how much time for discussion and Q&A?

Please take the time to really analyze this, secure Federal funding and outside private funding before taking final action.

Thank you.
Melissa McKenna