

**Catherine Shelton
Testimony
FY24 Capital Budget
Montgomery County Council
February 7, 2023, at 7 pm**

Good evening, members of the Montgomery County Council.

My name is Catherine Shelton. I am an aerospace engineer working as a Quality Engineer in the Space Exploration Sector of Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. Having worked as an engineer for 8 years, I am now pursuing a master's degree in Space Systems Engineering from Johns Hopkins University.

And I am also very proud to be a Montgomery College alum—having graduated in 2011.

If someone had told me when I was a student at Watkins Mill High School that I would one day become an aerospace engineer, I would not have believed them. Back in high school, math was my worst subject. But I found my way to MC. I had a few stops and starts in my educational journey, including a stint in the US Air Force. Upon my return, I attended MC then transferred to the University of Maryland's Clark School of Engineering—though I silently wished I could've stayed, and have MC be a 4 year school instead.

My education led to my work today at Johns Hopkins, where I have been involved with the DART spacecraft mission. This spacecraft, built during the pandemic, successfully impacted an asteroid and was the first historical mission for NASA's Planetary Defense Coordination Office. It showed that humanity now has a chance to protect Earth from a possibly catastrophic asteroid impact. My current work is the Dragonfly mission and the Narrow Angle Camera payload on the Europa Clipper mission. The Dragonfly mission is slated to go to Saturn's moon Titan, and land a nuclear powered octo-copter, to explore the richly organic world for the building blocks of life. The Europa Clipper mission will take very high-resolution photos using the Europa Imaging Suite that contains narrow and wide-angle cameras. It is these cameras that will capture visual evidence whether there is liquid water---and perhaps life---beneath Europa's icy shell.

I am here tonight to give back—to ask for your continued support of the College. I know from experience that quality facilities are critical to a student's success. Please support the College's capital budget—including a much-needed student services center at Germantown, and modern libraries at all three campuses. Libraries played a critical role in my education, giving me a place to study after a grueling commute between classes and access to technology and books. And finally, I am so excited to hear about the College's expansion into the East County. Doing so means more people, like myself, can access the incredible education MC provides.

I know that many things have factored into my academic and professional success. One of the most important factors is the investment people have made in me. So, I want to thank you for investing in Montgomery College by providing quality facilities that have helped many students, like me, to succeed. Please continue to support my alma mater, Montgomery College.