

# Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Inc.



April 2, 2024

Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Testimony to Montgomery County Council  
Supplemental Appropriation #24-67 in the FY24 Operating Budget, \$260,000 for  
BlackRock Center for the Arts  
Position: Support

Good afternoon Council President Friedson and members of the County Council. Thank you for the opportunity to share the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber's support for supplemental appropriation #24-67 in the FY24 operating budget for BlackRock Center for the Arts. I am Paula Ross, President & CEO of the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce. BlackRock is a valued member of the Chamber and an important partner in our Chamber's community engagement programming in the Upcounty.

BlackRock sits in the Town Center of Germantown and while it is an incredible hub for arts and culture experiences and education, it is so much more than that. BlackRock has grown to be the community gathering center in the Upcounty. When the Council needs a space to conduct a town hall in the Upcounty, they call BlackRock. When the Chamber needed a place in Germantown to host a Coffee with a Cop event to convene residents and public safety officials for important conversations, BlackRock offered its space. When there is a need in the community, BlackRock opens its doors, such as during the pandemic when the center became a hub for food distribution to those community members in need. Community groups convene at BlackRock for meetings, neighbors gather at BlackRock to share a movie on the lawn or to see Santa, the business community comes together with neighbors at BlackRock at markets held on the lawn during nice weather.

You might know that the GGCC will be conducting a feasibility study in Germantown Town Center, the goal of which is to assess the viability of creating a sustainable Business Improvement District or Urban District. BlackRock is at the heart of that plan, both as a geographic partner and economic development convener. BlackRock will help us bring the business community and residents together in support of the economic development that was planned in Germantown but never yet realized.



# Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Inc.



I was a leader in the arts nonprofit field for nearly a decade and know first-hand how difficult it is to run a nonprofit arts organization. Add in the layers of programming and resources needed to be THE community convener, host, and civic partner, and reaching for sustainability becomes ever more difficult.

I urge you to support this supplemental appropriation for BlackRock. I know Katie and her team are willing to roll up their sleeves to strategically plan a sustainable future for BlackRock, and that future must be couched in a sustainable plan for the Town Center, which is where we are willing to roll up our sleeves and help as well. Your support safeguards our Town Center as BlackRock plans its evolution to serve our community in all the ways we've come to expect.

Sincerely,

Paula Ross  
President & CEO  
Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce

*For 75 years, the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce has been the leading advocate for businesses along the upper I270 corridor in Montgomery County, commonly called the "Upcounty." We specifically serve the business communities in Gaithersburg, Germantown, Clarksburg, and Damascus; our membership currently includes approximately 470 members in dozens of industries. Our members range in size from volunteer-run nonprofits with zero employees, to solopreneurs, to businesses with thousands of employees in the Upcounty. We are committed to being a voice for all businesses in the Upcounty, resulting in a business-friendly environment and high quality of life in our community.*