



Montgomery County Council Public Hearings
Montgomery Cares Advisory Board
Testimony
April 8, 2024



Dear Montgomery County Council Members:

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Peter Lowet and I am the Executive Director of Mobile Medical Care, a community health center that participates in the Montgomery Cares Program. Today, I am testifying on behalf of the Montgomery Cares Advisory Board (MCAB) on which I have had the honor of serving for many years. MCAB has laid out several funding priorities across the five program areas that make up the Healthcare for the Uninsured Program. The Board is pleased the County Executive has included some of the Board's priority items in his recommended budget for FY25. Today, I would like to highlight the two highest advocacy priorities for MCAB.

The first priority relates to the Montgomery Cares program which supports primary care for low-income, underinsured and uninsured adult County residents. We urge the Council to increase the fee for service reimbursement rate to a regionally competitive rate of \$175 per encounter. Safety-net providers are currently reimbursed at only 41% of the average actual cost of care. Even as many clinics already leverage volunteers and donated services. At the current level clinics are at risk of not maintaining financial sustainability. The Board is grateful that the County Executive has included 1.8 million dollars in his recommended budget, which will close the gap between the current and requested rate by 1/3. This is a wonderful and meaningful start. MCAB asks the Council to adopt the County Executive's proposed increase, and if possible, find a way to close the gap between the proposed \$125 rate and the \$175 target rate. The target rate of \$175 would cover 70% of the cost of care, which would be a smart, cost effective public investment. The pandemic has taught us all that addressing health access and health equity is essential to the wellbeing of the entire community.

The second priority that MCAB would like to highlight relates to the Care for Kids Program. This program serves low-income children that are ineligible for Medicaid, MCHIP, or other Medical Assistance. Unsurprisingly, the number of children served by the program continues to grow with a dramatic increase in enrollment and the return to pre-pandemic care levels. Additional funding is requested to cover any current deficit and respond to and provide essential support for the anticipated growth in the Care for Kids program in the coming year.

Thank you for your time consideration.

Peter Lowet
Montgomery Cares Advisory Board