

April 4, 2024

To the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing to advocate for full funding of the Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) FY25 budget proposal, and to thank you for your FY24 support of the library budget as well as your several proclamations related to people with disabilities, a particular concern of mine. MCPL's staff, books, online resources, programs, and other services enable MoCo residents to be lifelong learners, even if age or disability keeps them from going to physical libraries.

All of this happens because of staff. And more people can benefit. Therefore, I specifically advocate for full staffing, for staff training, and for expanded marketing and outreach.

Full staffing: Full staffing gives the staff enough time to spend with users. E.g., people call or show up with all kinds of questions and needs, way beyond "can you recommend a book?" Organizations may want help thinking through library programs they want to offer. Students may ask for ideas about term papers. People with disabilities may need help to get books or to get into the accessibility software on library computers. Etc. Full staffing includes substitute staff (for illnesses, vacancies, and vacations) and Library Pages (for re-shelving books). Library Page jobs also provide valuable work for people with disabilities.

Staff development: I'd love for MCPL to be where librarians from everywhere want to work because staff are well supported. This includes strong development and training programs. I particularly hope for all staff to be comfortable and skillful in providing services for people with disabilities.

Marketing and outreach: MCPL needs increased, funded marketing and outreach because lots of MoCo residents don't know libraries are much more than books on shelves. They're delighted once they discover free Internet access, special resources for kids and teens, online movies, magazines, genealogical resources, language classes, etc., plus author talks, writers' clubs, language practice groups, etc. More marketing will let more people discover all this. I trust that some of this marketing will specifically get the word out to people with disabilities.

Thanks to MCPL, we MoCo residents can be lifelong learners, for free, from infancy to elder years. To that end, I also endorse the Library Board / Friends of the Library Joint Letter.

Sincerely,

Betty (Frances D.) Thompson