

TO SUBMIT- FY 25 OP Testimony

Djamila Bah on recreation facility and activities in Montgomery Village

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Good evening, Council President Friedson and members of the Montgomery County Council.

My name is Djamila Bah and I live in Montgomery Village. My son attended South Lake Elementary School and is currently at Neelsville Middle School. I also support Safe Places, the tenants' association at Cider Mill Apartments. I want to thank Councilmember Katz for your continued support of the residents of Cider Mill. Today I am here to talk about the need for a recreation center and youth activities for the young people who live in Montgomery Village. I also want to thank Councilmembers Sayles and Luedtke for all your support in this effort.

There has been a serious increase in crime and violence some of which is related to gangs.

The closure of Lake Forest Mall which is technically in the city of Gaithersburg but just across the street from Cider Mill Apartments which is in Montgomery Village has led to worsening crime-related problems. Let me be explicit- gunshots during the daytime hours, drug use, sale of drugs. During daytime at 3pm, someone was stabbed at the CVS.

We are really worried about our safety and our children's safety.

Our tenants' association has been working with the property manager, the property owner and the Police Department, as well as Councilmember Sayles and Councilmember Luedtke's offices to address the crime. We have also worked with Joe Hooks and the 480 Club to bring soccer programs to engage our young people in organized afterschool programs.

These are important steps but we need your support to prevent crime and provide alternatives to our young people.

But we need to do more. I have two asks.

First, councilmembers, I urge you to support the first steps towards identifying a space for recreation activities in Montgomery Village.

With Councilmembers Luedtke and Sayles' support, the County Executive has recommended adding \$50,000 to begin studying potential space for a Montgomery Village/Gaithersburg Recreation Center. Please support this item in this year's budget.

Second, I urge you to please support activities that engage out-of-school young people productively through jobs. We have to give young people an alternative to be able to walk away from illegal activities.

With these investments, Montgomery Village can AGAIN be a great place to live. Thank you.