

Montgomery County, MD FY25 Operating Budget Hearing

Testimony of Victoria Thomas
on behalf of the Montgomery County Community Cat Coalition (MC C3)

Good Evening. My name is Victoria Thomas and I want to thank the council again for this opportunity to speak in favor of a county-supported no cost Spay Neuter Clinic for underserved County residents including Community Cat caregivers. This is mandated in the Chapter 5 Code and was recommended in the Maddies Million Pet Challenge Consult which you all received.

I am representing the Montgomery County Community Cat Coalition (MC C3)-- a nonprofit all volunteer animal welfare organization formed in 2016. We promote the welfare of community cats through Trap-Neuter-Return, by supporting community cat caregivers with spay/neuter, cat food, cat shelters and vet care.

The Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center was a key player in the formation of MC C3 and since then the county refers virtually all healthy outdoor cats to us. Our volunteers get daily calls about both community and friendly cats and kittens. For example, MC C3 trapped and vetted a majority of the Himalayan cats who were recently abandoned in Sligo Creek Park.

However, without a low cost spay/neuter clinic in our County, we must compete with other animal welfare organizations and underserved residents in other counties for scarce low cost spay/neuter slots. There is a waiting list of weeks if not months and by that time the cats we are asked to TNR are gone or have given birth to new community cats.

We also interact regularly with indoor/outdoor cats of underserved residents who also have no access to low cost spay/neuter so their cats continue to breed and add to the community cat population. Many end up in MCASAC.

The Maddies fund consult suggests that at least 5 subsidized surgeries for pets belonging to socioeconomically challenged individuals per 1,000 constituents will reduce shelter intake. For our County that means about 5,000 surgeries per year. And for a subsidized program to help pet owners, the cost must be no higher than \$20 per spay/neuter.

Thus, MC C3 has been a key partner in MCSNIP, a coalition of county animal welfare organizations which has a proposal to run a no charge spay/neuter clinic for underserved residents—including Community Cat caregivers -- leveraging a fully-equipped mobile spay/neuter clinic for \$1 a month. We ask the county for additional funding in the OAS budget for staff and supplies so that the clinic can be fully operational, providing up to 3,000 surgeries per year. We look forward to working with the new OAS director, Caroline Hairfield.

In our progressive county no cost spay/neuter is not only a prudent investment since it will reduce costs to the county by reducing the number of animals entering MCASAC, it is also ethically the right thing to do so that ALL county residents have the same access to vet care.

Thank you again for your time and attention.