



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD

### **FY25 Budget Hearing Testimony – April 8, 2024**

Council President Friedson, members of the County Council, and staff –

Good evening. I am Grace Manubay, resident of District 6 and vice chair of the Montgomery County Library Board. The Library Board has fourteen members appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council, and we make recommendations to the County Executive on matters affecting the public library system. We also serve as liaisons with twenty-two Library Advisory Committees, groups of community members who share with us concerns related to their local libraries. I am testifying this evening to request full support of the County Executive's budget request for the library.

Many library branches host bilingual programs, such as Spanish and French conversation clubs for adults; virtual Spanish conversation club for teens; beginning Mandarin Chinese for elementary-aged children; and story times for infants, toddlers, and families. Last fiscal year, the library delivered 40 bilingual story time programs. During this fiscal year, as of today, MCPL has hosted 47 bilingual story times in Spanish and English and 15 bilingual story times in Mandarin, Amharic, French, and Korean. Twenty-five additional programs are currently on the calendar between now and June 30. To promote reading in the home, our youngest of readers and their caregivers must have access to books in these languages. To reflect the changing demographics in the county, the County Executive's budget includes funds to revitalize the world languages materials in the library's collection.

Residents with a library card have access to an impressive breadth of digital resources available 24/7. The Washington Post claims that "Democracy Dies in Darkness," but its articles are hidden behind a paywall for subscribers. With a library card, all residents have digital access to the Post and other newspapers. Did you know that a library card grants instant access to electronic books, audiobooks, music, and movies through the streaming service Hoopla? For example, the book Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt has a waitlist of 141 people for the hard copy, but on Hoopla, residents can access the book with no waiting period. Residents can also watch the movie Oppenheimer, listen to Taylor Swift albums, and read Big Nate comics. Hoopla also has study aids for English proficiency and high school equivalency exams, books on how to write a resume, financial literacy, and more. The Montgomery County Public Library system is one of the world's – that's right, WORLD's – biggest users of Hoopla. The budget enhancement includes a request for additional funding to meet the county's demand for electronic resources, which provides access to library services when the buildings might be closed.

The budget also includes a new outreach initiative to create an outdoor pop-up library experience by deploying the state of Maryland's first all-electric outreach van. This approach will increase awareness, particularly among English learners and lower-income communities in Montgomery County, and will improve access and use of services and reading materials in Equity Focus Areas. Increased outreach about the library may help address gaps in early literacy that recent kindergarten readiness figures have shown.

Lastly, the County Executive is requesting funding for staff training. Professional development for staff is necessary to maintain high levels of service and retain highly effective employees. The chair of the Wheaton Library Advisory Committee has repeatedly praised Wheaton staff for teaching sessions on how to access electronic resources, and has also given praise to the regional manager for maintaining excellent communication between MCPL and the community throughout the pandemic.

On behalf of the Library Board, I am urging Council to approve the County Executive's fiscal year 2025 budget request. His recommendations provide the library system with the resources it needs to continue implementation of its strategic plan and to ensure all Montgomery County residents have access to all of MCPL's programs and resources.