

Good evening Council President Andrew Friedson and members of the County Council.

My name is Barbara Tomar. I am a member of Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Congregation and Action in Montgomery and I am going to talk about dental access in Montgomery County.

After listening to more than 1,500 Montgomery County residents, we heard that access to affordable dental care is a priority. Recognizing that dental care is a gateway to many health issues and that we have a fractured dental care system that is often difficult to navigate and is extremely expensive, in 2023 we asked you to invest in dental care so that it could be accessible for uninsured and underinsured adults.

In this past fiscal year's budget you made some key investments which will help support both our county dental clinics and our safety net clinics. We also understand that because of procurement delays our county was not able to secure a mobile health and dental van until recently.

While waiting on the procurement process, we worked together with the Primary Care Coalition (PCC) and America Diversity Group (ADG) to secure private foundation funds to make sure that a mobile dental clinic visited the Hewitt Avenue Community three times between December and March.

This pilot project was successfully implemented and 35 people were able to access quality dental care with cleanings, fillings, and extractions. There were very few cancellations- mostly due to COVID- demonstrating both the unmet demand that exists as well as the need for strong partnership with trusted organizations.

We ask you to sustain funding for dental care such that the county mobile dental van can begin its work in communities with unmet needs. And we further ask that the mobile dental van can build on lessons from our pilot to: 1) connect uninsured and underinsured patients to brick and mortar dental homes for ongoing care, both preventative and specialized and 2) ensure there is sharing of relevant dental records to prevent unnecessary and overuse of testing.

Thank you.