



**Administration**  
Communications & Outreach  
Engagement • Finance  
Human Resources & Staff Development  
Information Technology • Quality Assurance  
Respite Coordination  
7362 Calhoun Place  
Rockville, MD 20855

**Adult Services**  
Community Living  
Employment  
& Meaningful Day  
Personal Supports  
7362 Calhoun Place  
Rockville, MD 20855

**Children & Youth Services**  
After All  
4140 Wexford Drive  
Kensington, MD 20895  
KFICCC  
10611 Tenbrook Drive  
Silver Spring, MD 20901

Dear President Fani-Gonzalez, and members of the Council,

My name is Julz Abate. I am the Respite Administrator for The Arc Montgomery County, a member of the Governor's Commission on Caregiving, and the Respite Ambassador for Montgomery County. I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to the Council for your continued investment in respite services. Montgomery County has long positioned itself as a leader in supporting older adults, people with disabilities, and the caregivers who make community living possible. We are an Age Friendly County, a -Dementia Friendly- County, and one of the few counties in Maryland that commits local dollars to sustaining a robust respite system. That commitment has made a real difference in the lives of families—and we are truly thankful.

That leadership matters now more than ever, because the demand for respite is rising faster than available resources.

Our older adult population now exceeds 187,000 residents. More people are living longer with complex and progressive conditions, including dementia. At the same time, state waiver waitlists and approval delays continue to grow, forcing families to rely on county funded respite as their primary source of support—not as a supplement, but as the only option to keep care stable at home.

Across Montgomery County, caregivers are holding together fragile care systems. They are working full-time, raising children, and providing medical level care they were never trained to give. They are exhausted. They are overwhelmed. And many are one crisis away from collapse.

Respite is not optional. It is what prevents emergencies, delays institutional placement, protects caregiver health, and keeps people safely at home in their communities.

And yet, demand has now far outpaced supply. Due to unprecedented enrollment growth, respite applications had to be closed in December. In response, the County generously appropriated an additional \$250,000, allowing us to support more families and respond to those who found themselves in crisis. We are incredibly grateful for that action—it helped stabilize families when they needed it most.

I am respectfully asking that this \$250,000 be included in the FY27 baseline budget, so we can continue serving families without interruption and ensure access for caregivers who are already stretched beyond capacity.

These families are not asking for more than they need. They are asking for enough support to keep going.

When respite hours are reduced for cost containment- purposes, the consequences do not disappear—they shift. Seniors and people with disabilities experience more falls, medication errors, and unmanaged medical conditions. Emergency room visits and 911 calls increase across Montgomery County. Families are forced into premature nursing home placements, often against their loved ones' wishes. Adult Protective Services referrals rise, not because families are neglectful, but because they are exhausted and unsupported. Fire and Rescue Services are called into preventable situations that could have been avoided with stable care at home.

This is not hypothetical. These are predictable outcomes of reducing preventive, community-based services.



**Administration**  
Communications & Outreach  
Engagement • Finance  
Human Resources & Staff Development  
Information Technology • Quality Assurance  
Respite Coordination  
7362 Calhoun Place  
Rockville, MD 20855

**Adult Services**  
Community Living  
Employment  
& Meaningful Day  
Personal Supports  
7362 Calhoun Place  
Rockville, MD 20855

**Children & Youth Services**  
After All  
4140 Wexford Drive  
Kensington, MD 20895  
KFICCC  
10611 Tenbrook Drive  
Silver Spring, MD 20901

---

I am respectfully asking the County Council, through its oversight of the Department of Health and Human Services, to:

- Increase respite hours to 144 annually, allowing families access to respite throughout all 12 months of the year
- Make this a permanent increase of the special appropriation
- Direct HHS to prioritize stabilization of respite services as a proven preventive intervention that reduces downstream costs to hospitals, Adult Protective Services, Fire and Rescue, and long-term care systems

Respite is one of the most cost-effective tools we have. Cutting it does not save Montgomery County money; it delays costs, magnifies them, and transfers them to crisis systems that are already stretched thin.

Members of the Council, this is a moment to decide whether Montgomery County will continue to lead with prevention, compassion, and dignity—or wait to pay far more, financially and morally, when families can no longer hold everything together.

Thank you for your leadership, partnership, and your continued commitment to our community.

Sincerely,

Julia Abate

Respite Administrator

The Arc Montgomery County