

## Written Testimony in Support of FY27 Operating Budget Funding for MoCo Pride Center, Inc.

Submitted by: Jason Edwards, [REDACTED], Germantown, Maryland

Montgomery County Council FY27 Operating Budget Hearing — April 8, 2026

Dear Council President Fani-González and members of the Montgomery County Council:

My name is Jason Edwards, and I am a proud resident of Germantown, Maryland. I also serve as a Board Member of MoCo Pride Center, Inc. — though I want to be clear that my written testimony is in my capacity as a Montgomery County constituent, not as an organizational representative. I am here because this work matters to me as a neighbor and a member of this community.

I am submitting this testimony in support of the FY27 Operating Budget, with an amendment to fund the Montgomery County Pride Family, MoCo Pride Center, Inc., at a minimum of \$1 million in the base budget.

I want to speak briefly about why this matters to me personally. Montgomery County is an extraordinarily diverse community, and I believe deeply that the measure of a community's strength is how well it shows up for the people who have historically been pushed to its margins. The work of MoCo Pride Center reflects that strength. It is a place where LGBTQIA+ residents, BIPOC community members, and allies across our county can find affirming space, community connection, access to resources, and support services that too often are not available anywhere else.

I have seen firsthand how meaningful it is for people to have a community anchor, a place that says, without qualification, *you belong here*. That is not a luxury. For many residents of Montgomery County, it is a lifeline. As someone who cares deeply about the well-being of this community and the people in it, I know that the presence of an organization like MoCo Pride is not incidental to a healthy county, it is essential to one.

The demand for these services is growing. Our county continues to grow in population and diversity, and the need for affirming, accessible, community-centered support has never been greater. Organizations doing this work cannot meet that demand on good intentions alone, they need stable, meaningful public investment.

I respectfully urge this Council to ensure that MoCo Pride Center, Inc. is funded at a minimum of \$1 million in the FY27 base budget. This is not just a line item; it is a statement about what Montgomery County values and who Montgomery County is for.

Thank you for your time, your service to this community, and your consideration of this request.

Respectfully,

Jason Edwards