

Testimony of Zuri Davis
11th grader, Richard Montgomery High School

It may seem as though a fully-funded parks department is a **nice** to have, rather than a **need** to have, but I'd like to testify to the contrary. My name is Zuri Davis. I'm a Junior at Richard Montgomery High School, and am a competitive skater in three disciplines - singles skating, solo ice dance, and theatre on ice. I have been skating at the Wheaton and Cabin John ice rinks since I was 4 years old. I have four main points for you to consider today:

5. **Montgomery parks and facilities are not just recreation, they are a family and a community away from home.** I spent most of my childhood summers at Wheaton Ice Arena, from the Cool Summer Ice Skating camp to the Theatre on Ice camp and the Freestyle camps, spending my entire day at the rink, where I developed love of the ice, and lifelong friends, fostered by incredible staff and coaches all within 10 minutes of my house. I am now an international competitor, representing the USA in Theatre on Ice, which I credit in great part to my summers at Wheaton. To this day, I still consider the Wheaton and Cabin John rinks as my home, and my favorite time of year is performing at the Wheaton annual holiday show with my friends.
6. **Montgomery parks are a truly accessible way for youth to get involved in and succeed in costly sports.** Recently, Olympian Alyssa Liu's dad mentioned that it cost him over a million dollars for her to get to the Olympics. I know my parents appreciated that I have access to affordable and welcoming camps, affordable group classes with Olympic-level coaches, and ample and affordable ice time all in my backyard. That is one of the best parts of being a Montgomery County resident, and it makes sure that **all** kids, not just those from advantaged families, can succeed in this expensive and difficult sport.
7. **Montgomery parks foster dreams.** World Champion and Olympian Ilia Malinin is known for his quadruple axel - a move for which he is the only human to be able to successfully perform. He, as well as National medalist Sarah Everhardt, National competitor Jasmine Clarke, and countless other national and international competitors, skate at my rink - Cabin John, serving as an inspiration for generations of skaters.
8. And finally, **Montgomery parks support positive mental and physical health.** Mental illness and obesity are both on the rise. Having a full variety of sports and artistic activities has been shown to help increase mental and physical wellness in youth and adults alike. Skating at the County rinks improves my entire week!

Our Parks department is one of a kind and truly an asset to our county and its residents in a myriad of ways. I know in a difficult funding environment like the one we're in, it's hard to fund everything, and I thank you for your time in listening to your constituents as we advocate for funding for our great County. With that being said, I hope that you can consider fully funding our truly outstanding Parks department so they can maintain their current level of service - we truly need them!