

Good evening, Council President and Members of the County Council.

My name is Glenn Fellman and I am a lifelong Montgomery County resident. I'm here to speak about funding related to homelessness.

According to the 2025 Point-in-Time report, the county's homeless population is 162% higher than in 2021. Family homelessness is up 80% from 2024 to 2025. Encampments are now in many parts of the county — including visible ones in our own backyards and neighborhoods. I have visited 25 separate sites north of the beltway in the last three months. Germantown, Gaithersburg, Rockville, Aspen Hill, Twinbrook, North Bethesda, Wheaton, Silver Spring and more. All reported to you and officials from HHS, as well as DHCA, DEP and MCPD when appropriate.

The Council should approve the recommended funding for Services to End and Prevent Homelessness. The Executive's proposal increases SEPH to \$68.2 million — a \$6.2 million (10.1%) increase over last year. Montgomery County does a great job making sure families and children are off the streets, and offering services and shelter to others. That work must continue. However, the workload, and the problem, won't abate unless the County adopts policy changes that cause that outcome.

It is time to adjust the SEPH and Continuum of Care approach. After intensive, good-faith outreach and offers of services, individuals who repeatedly decline help and continue to occupy public spaces must be made to leave, and the space reclaimed. The current Housing-First model, while well-intentioned, has not stemmed the visible growth of encampments. We must add accountability:

services yes — but unlimited illegal camping and public nuisances no. Residents do not want homeless encampments in our backyards, and we should not be expected to see them for months or years at a stretch from our kitchen windows in Flower Hill, Wheaton, or Germantown.

That's why in addition to recommending the approval of the proposed budget for SEPH, I am also requesting a substantial increase in funding for DHCA code compliance and inspections beyond the modest 6.5% bump already proposed. DHCA's Housing Code Enforcement program is slated for \$7 million next year, but we need more inspectors and faster response times to address violations tied to illegal dumping, neglect of commercial properties, and the fields of trash left by encampments. We must also fund parallel agencies responsible for maintaining public land — Parks, DOT and General Services— so they can promptly reclaim sidewalks, rights-of-way, and other county-owned spaces.

I urge you to approve the SEPH increase and add targeted new dollars for stronger code enforcement and public-space reclamation. Our neighborhoods deserve safety, and our most vulnerable neighbors deserve real paths out of homelessness — not endless tolerance of encampments.

Thank you for your time and for considering these changes in the final FY2027 budget.

Respectfully Submitted,
Glenn Fellman
April 8, 2026