



COMMISSION ON AGING

April 9, 2026

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Written Testimony on the FY27 Operating Budget by the Montgomery County Commission on Aging

Dear Members of the Council:

We are writing as the co-chairs of the Montgomery County Commission on Aging. The Commission is gratified that the County Executive allocated \$78.8 million for aging and disability services. However, we would like to highlight and raise up several programs we identified as top budget priorities that do not appear to be adequately reflected in the County Executive's recommended budget.

First, the in-home respite program provides temporary occasional care for frail elderly, adults and children with disabilities to give relief to families and other primary caregivers. In-home respite is the number one service requested by caregivers and one that is available to all residents, irrespective of income. It allows caregivers to stay "on the job" while older and disabled residents can stay safely in their own homes. The FY27 budget request assumes the same number of clients will be served as was served in FY25 and FY26. However, all evidence points to the demand for respite increasing geometrically as the population of older and disabled residents grows. We believe it is better to plan (and budget) for the actual, anticipated need rather than artificially constrain demand through an insufficient budget request. Caregivers are desperately waiting for this support. We should not rely on emergency requests for supplemental funding and respectfully request additional funding – as much as \$250,000 — for robust expansion of the in-home respite program.

Second, Montgomery County is home to more (aging) Villages than anywhere else in the country. Villages provide family caregivers and care recipients with the personal support that enables them to continue to live with dignity in their communities. Volunteer-powered, villages also save the county and state the cost of paid caregiving and institutionalization of older and disabled residents. The FY27 budget includes funding for a Villages Coordinator who assists with current and emerging Villages and promotes the creation of new ones. But we can do better for the perennially underserved areas in East

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County and Up-county. Specifically, we ask for \$60,000 to fund four competitive grants to organizations wishing to establish Villages in these areas. These funds are above and beyond what has been requested for the Villages Coordinator. For the Commission, this is an issue of equity. By not focusing on Villages in underserved areas, the County perpetuates inequities in quality of life, access to services, and even outcomes for thousands of our older residents.

Lastly, we are also asking for \$10,000 in funds to support the Annual Forum that the Commission sponsors each spring. Older adults and their caregivers need a public space to learn about emerging issues, hear from experts, and share perspectives. While the Commission has hosted annual Public Forums for these purposes, without dedicated resources, the reach and impact of these events is limited, particularly for residents who cannot attend in person or who need accessible formats. These Forums have been very productive. For example, the 2024 Forum on Housing yielded a project with the Urban Institute that has delivered the equivalent of \$90,000 in free consulting to the County. The 2025 Forum on Caregiving resulted in the sponsorship of a bill in this year's General Assembly to study the impact of a universal caregiver stipend. This bill was proposed by the Commission and is now headed to the Governor's desk for signature! We request the County provide dedicated funding to ensure the Commission's annual Public Forum is professional, accessible, impactful, and widely promoted.

In closing, we urge the Council to fund what the evidence shows works and provides a positive return on investment, and for the Commission on Aging, that means respite care, Villages, and the Annual Forum. Villages and respite care have proven successful in improving the lives of those providing community-based, family care in the county. We need to expand access to programs that work—both in terms of the number of participants eligible and the level of service provided. We need to provide sufficient funding now to eliminate program waitlists and contract interruptions in the future.

Thank you.

Linda Bergofsky and Wayne Berman