

WRITTEN FORMAT OF VIRTUAL TESTIMONY

BY: AMY JAVAID, President and CEO, A Wider Circle

ON: April 9, 2026

TO: Montgomery County Council

RE: Comments on Proposed FY27 Budget

Good afternoon esteemed members of the Council, Council Vice President Balcombe and Council President Fani-Gonzales. Thank you for the opportunity to share thoughts on the upcoming proposed FY27 budget.

My name is Amy Javid and I serve as the President and CEO of A Wider Circle. We are a social service provider offering furniture, household goods, professional clothing and an array of support services to County residents in need. Last year we furnished close to 3,000 homes. Close to half of all clients come from Montgomery County. Clients come to us from an array of partner agencies and for various reasons. They have done so for 25 years - and we are incredibly grateful to all on the Council, many across the county and friends and partners beyond who have invested in our work and mission to date.

We are proud to serve within the County safety net ecosystem standing alongside incredible partners. Close coordination with these partners is vital as we know many of those we serve also require their services in addition to what is offered at A Wider Circle.

As a result I sit before you today to request reconsideration of the proposed 2.5% COLA increase for Montgomery County contracts as listed in the proposed draft FY27 budget. A Wider Circle respectfully requests an 8% increase.

While we understand the challenging times and the difficult decisions before you as a Council, the current proposal will threaten our service continuity, our workforce stability and our ability to meet the growing community needs.

Social service and safety net nonprofits in the County are at a breaking point. In this past year, A Wider Circle has had former volunteers and even donors become clients as jobs are cut and expenses rise across the region.

We are serving many more clients than in prior years, and their needs are deeper, more complex, and more time intensive. At the same time, contracts have not kept pace with inflation, operating costs, or increased administrative demands.

We are seeing

- Significant increases in the number of people seeking help
- Greater urgency and complexity involving housing instability, food insecurity, health and mental health crises, and family economic distress
- These realities require more staff time per client, stronger followup, and higher quality care — without corresponding increases in funding.

Due to inflation in food, gas, electricity, housing, and healthcare, our staff are in crisis:

- Real wages for nonprofit staff have declined
- Frontline workers—already historically underpaid—are falling further behind
- Many work a fulltime job plus one or more parttime jobs and still struggle to survive

At the same time:

- Workloads and emotional strain have increased
- Burnout and turnover are accelerating
- **Some nonprofit employees now rely on the very services they help provide**

This situation is unsustainable and deeply concerning.

Our operating costs are surging. We are facing steep increases in: energy and utility costs, rent and facilities, insurance premiums, employee health insurance, transportation and fuel and more. These are unavoidable expenses that current contracts simply do not cover.

At the same time, the administrative burden of managing contracts has increased significantly. This results in requiring more staff time and administrative capacity—without additional funding. This pulls resources away from direct services - and support of those most vulnerable among us.

Without an 8% COLA, our capacity to serve clients will shrink, experienced staff will leave, critical services will be disrupted and county investments will be at risk. An 8% increase is not an expansion; it is a survival measure.

We thank you in advance for your careful consideration of this specific budget proposal increase from 2.5% to 8% in the upcoming fiscal year.

Thank you.