

Dear members of the Montgomery County Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to convey my support for the county's proposed FY 2027 funding for the Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center (MCASAC).

My name is David Lax, and I have resided in Montgomery County, MD since 1976. After retiring from a 48-year career as a transportation energy/environmental analyst, I became a regular volunteer dog walker for the MCASAC in October 2023. I walk dogs at the shelter almost every Monday through Friday for a few hours starting at 7 a.m., and have observed, firsthand, the dedication of MCASAC personnel in caring for the animals.

I strongly support fully funding the proposed FY2027 budget for MCASAC so that it may continue its mission of providing vital daily services in rescuing animals and in maintaining the health and well-being of those under the shelter's care. These services directly contribute to the welfare of our community. Consider, for example, the many instances where MSASAC has been directly involved in the intake and care of animals caught up in house fires or rescued due to abandonment and/or abuse by their owners.

The MCASAC management team is to be commended for the many positive steps that have been taken over the past 3-4 years to address the perennial issues associated with frequently operating at or over the shelter capacity. Some examples include:

- enlargement of the pool of available volunteers to assist with animal care, enrichment and exercise
- expansion of the network of pet fosters
- greater networking with animal rescue organizations
- the institution of more enrichment opportunities for kenneled dogs via the establishment of a playgroup program
- increased efforts to publicize and facilitate the adoption of animals by County residents.

However, more work needs to be done in all the above areas to generate a substantial impact on the capacity issue. Moreover, additional funding would help expand community-oriented initiatives such as the low-cost spay/neuter program which saw a soft roll-out last year but needs to be considerably enlarged to have a meaningful impact on the population of pets in Montgomery County.

The shelter should hire more employees to provide adequate daily care for the dogs. The direct daily care of dogs is largely provided by a shelter staff of 15 Animal Care Attendants (ACAs) but this level of staffing is insufficient as many dogs may be left kenneled from 14 to 20 hours. There are not enough personnel to provide dogs with time outside the kennels, and especially not enough personnel to provide dogs with an evening break. This leads to increased stress for the dogs as well as the people who care for them. According to the September 2023 [Maddies Operational Consult Report](#) (posted on the MCASAC website), a shelter with resident animal populations in the range of MCASAC should have a staff of 23 ACAs.

Reliance on unpaid volunteers as a substitute for ACAs is neither a sufficient nor reliable guarantee that all dogs at the shelter will receive an evening break before being confined to their kennels for the night. I strongly urge the Montgomery County Council to consider funding for MCASAC to hire contractors to walk/exercise the dogs and perform, as needed, final clean-

ups of the kennels during a late evening daily shift (e.g., from 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm when volunteers and the general public are not allowed on the shelter property).

Thank you for supporting MCASAC and for this opportunity to submit comments.

Sincerely,

David H Lax

Cell: [REDACTED]