

Dear Council President Fani-Gonzalez and Councilmembers:

My name is Kristyn Feldman, and I am a resident of District 6. I am an active member of the Glenview Neighborhood Association and a Director of the Aspen Institute's Weave: The Social Fabric project, a program devoted to creating deep community connections and supporting people to improve their neighborhoods through relational service.

At this time, I would like to urge the Council to prioritize food access and invest in a stronger, more resilient food system in Montgomery County.

Food insecurity continues to rise across our County due to increasing food costs, economic instability, and uncertainty around federal nutrition programs. More families, seniors, and individuals are being forced to make impossible choices between paying for housing, healthcare, and food. As someone who has had both heads of household lose their jobs over the last year, I can attest that more and more people who never thought they would need assistance are faced with terrible choices. When I walk out my door, I can point to house after house of people who have lost their jobs due to the fall out of the dismantling of the federal government and the knock on effects of all the businesses who are impacted by severe contracting of the local economy. And on top of it all, medical and food costs have risen to shocking levels. How can people make ends meet? Let's be honest. They don't.

To meet this growing need, I respectfully urge the Council to:

Allocate an additional \$3.5 million to the Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR) to stabilize and strengthen the County's food assistance network. Local providers are facing higher costs and increased demand, and without additional investment, they will struggle to keep up. Support enhancements to the Food Systems Education grant, which will expand training and technical assistance for residents and community organizations. These investments empower community-led solutions like gardening and local food production, building long-term resilience. Reject proposed cuts to the Retail Food Access Program and Food as Medicine Grants. These programs are essential for connecting residents to nutritious food through grocery assistance, health screenings, and targeted support. Reducing funding would mean fewer resources for those who need them most—at a time when demand is rising.

Food is a basic human need. Ensuring that all residents have access to healthy, affordable food is critical to the overall health, stability, and dignity of our community.

I urge the Council to fully fund these priorities and protect the programs that so many residents rely on every day. Give them at least that peace of mind. Let their children go to school with good food while we tackle the other problems together.

Respectfully,  
Kristyn Feldman