

Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Fani-Gonzalez and Councilmembers,

My name is Marsha Scheinman and I am a resident of Council District 1. I am a retired physician, having practiced in Silver Spring and Kensington for over 30 years. Currently, I am involved in the food insecurity space. I cook and donate soups through KindSoups, do food rescue from restaurants to homeless shelters, take part in various advocacy groups in Montgomery County and the state of Maryland, and will be teaching in health classes in Montgomery County high schools, replicating what I've been doing in DC shelters for years.

I have seen the need for food assistance increase during my years in the field. I strongly believe that having food is a basic human right and is essential to the overall health and safety of our county.

Our residents simply cannot function well without adequate nutrition, i.e. basic calories with enough protein, fats and carbs to sustain them. More families, including those with veterans, senior and infants, are making heart-wrenching choices between paying for housing, food and healthcare. Even prior to this year, food insecurity in Montgomery County increased from 27% to 34% between 2023 and 2025. In a county with so many wealthy residents, we MUST make improving this situation a top priority. In addition to purely empathizing with those with food insecurity, we can look at the practical aspects that will cost our county more in the long run: people with inadequate nutrition end up not performing well at school and at work, losing more time due to health issues, and costing the entire system more in health care.

Many issues today are affecting food acquisition for our most vulnerable county residents more so than even one year ago. Among them are increasing fuel costs to get to stores or food distribution centers, increased food prices, economic instability, and uncertainty around federal nutrition programs.

To meet the growing need for food security, I respectfully urge the Council to:

Allocate an additional \$3.5 million to the **Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR)** to 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 are essential for connecting residents to nutritious food through grocery assistance, health screenings, and targeted support. Reduced funding would mean fewer resources for those who need them most, at a time when demand is rising.

Food is a basic human need. We can't expect people to be successful in school, work or longterm goals without adequate nutrition. 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.

Respectfully,
Marsha Seidelman Scheinman