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MONTGOMERY COUNTY FY27 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

on behalf of Housing Justice Montgomery

My name is Jo Shifrin, I am Jewish, and I live in County District 1. I am giving this testimony on behalf of Housing Justice Montgomery (HJM).

The Jewish value *Dei Machsorq* calls for ensuring everyone has sufficient resources for their needs. The County's budget is a moral document that should address those needs, including sufficient funding for housing, even in a difficult budget year.

I have been fortunate enough to be housed all of my life. But I've met many people in Montgomery County who, through no fault of their own, have lived with housing insecurity and faced homelessness. They have become disabled, faced domestic violence, lost their jobs during COVID, and were unable to continue to pay their rent, leading to their eviction. They lived in their car, borrowed space in the homes of friends or relatives, or spent time on the streets. Some went to live in shelters or hotel rooms. This is a pretty bleak picture, especially considering that our County, State, and Country has such a high standard of living compared with much of the world. Surely we can do better.

I am a member of Housing Justice Montgomery and I believe we need to fully fund a variety of housing programs to support people whose housing is most at risk and those currently experiencing homelessness. I support HJM's entire FY27 county housing budget:

1. No one should be forced out of their home because rents are too high. We estimate there is a need for **\$80 million** in **Emergency Rental Assistance** to help everyone who requests this aid. We estimate that 6,300 households will need an average of \$12,000 to remain housed.
2. **Rapid Rehousing (RRH)** is a tool used to make homelessness brief and ~~re-~~recurring. It offers short term rental assistance and light case management. We believe there is a

need for **\$20 million** to support 1,150 people who'll need RRH to exit homelessness this coming year.

3. For those with chronic health conditions and disabilities, **Permanent Supportive Housing** is another tool that has proven to end homelessness for our most vulnerable unhoused neighbors. I support **\$27 million** for long-term rental assistance with wrap around supportive services (e.g., case management, healthcare, mental health treatment) to ensure that community members with chronic health conditions and disabilities can permanently exit homelessness.
4. We are advocating **\$182 million for the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF)**. These funds will go towards financing the new construction and acquisition and rehabilitation of existing housing, to produce or preserve more affordable housing.
5. We are suggesting the creation of a new budget line: **\$3.3 million for Emergency Moving Assistance and Storage**. This money would be used to assist families, who are forcibly removed from housing via sheriff's eviction, to secure movers and have up to six months of storage for their belongings.
6. **Short-term Housing Housing and Resolution Program (SHARP)** provides a rapid exit from homelessness and pays the security deposit and first-month's rent, and a 12 month rental subsidy and light case management. It was budgeted to spend just under **\$7 million in** FY 26. We are requesting **\$9.5 million** to increase the number of families supported and include funding for individuals in this program.
7. We applaud the funding for one additional full-time staff person in the Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs to support the implementation of Expedited Bill 31-25, the Eviction Notification Bill, passed unanimously by the County Council in Fall 2025.

We look to the Council to pass a budget that reflects the values of safety, security, and accessibility for everyone who lives in Montgomery County. Thank you.