

Re: Montgomery County Animal Services and Adoption Center FY 2026 Budget  
Date: April 5, 2026

Greetings,

My name is Rebekah Young, and I have a home in Montgomery County, Maryland. Thank you for this opportunity to express my support for MCASAC's FY2027 budget. I am a regular dog-walking volunteer at the shelter, and have observed first-hand the dedication of MCASAC personnel in caring for the shelter animals. I strongly support fully funding MCASAC to continue its vital services, as these services directly contribute to the safety and health of the community.

I particularly wish to express my support for additional staffing to provide adequate daily care for the animals. The direct daily care of the animals is largely provided by Animal Care Attendants (ACAs). As staffed, dogs are left kenneled from about 14 to 20 hours at a time, and many dogs are out of the kennel for only 20 minutes to an hour a day. It appears that this is because there are not enough staff to provide them with adequate time outside the kennels, and especially not enough staff to provide them with an evening break and with enrichment time out of the kennel during the day. The current protocol is that every dog will get out of the kennel twice a day; one of those times may be time in an outdoor run, and one of those times must be after 2 pm.

The length of time kenneled and lack of enrichment leads to increased stress for many of the dogs, and likely stresses the staff tasked with their care and well-being. According to a November 2025 briefing provided by MCASAC to the Public Safety Committee, 79% of dogs euthanized in FY2025 were euthanized for behavioral reasons; 113 dogs were euthanized in FY2025 (excluding owner-requested euthanasia). I have observed first-hand the deterioration in behavior of dogs from the time they enter the shelter, and that deterioration is directly attributable to the stress of the kennel environment.

According to the Maddie's Operational Consult report from September 2023, for MCASAC to meet the relevant standard of care, it should have had 23 ACAs for FY2022-23, based on the number of animals in its annual care. See Maddie's report at page 29:

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices/Resources/Files/MMPC%20Consult%20Summary%20for%20MCASAC%2010\\_5\\_23.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/animalservices/Resources/Files/MMPC%20Consult%20Summary%20for%20MCASAC%2010_5_23.pdf)

It is my understanding that MCASAC has just as many—and maybe more—animals in its care on an annual basis now. Currently, MCASAC has 15 ACAs providing care to the animals. This leaves a significant deficit to adequately care for the animals, as noted in the Maddie's report. Maddie's offered several recommendations to address the staffing shortfall, including adding ACAs, training other staff members to walk dogs and provide enrichment, and hiring temporary employees to fill in for staff on light duty. Following Maddie's recommendations by adding ACAs or by requiring other staff to walk dogs would decrease the number of hours the dogs are kenneled without a break, with a concomitant decrease in stress to the animals, and of the humans who care for them. Having other staff members walk dogs was another suggestion, but that option is not being implemented.

In addition to more ACAs, MCASAC needs additional staff to support adoptions, the foster program, and the volunteer program. The Maddie's report specifically recommended adding a second staff person to the foster program. As for the volunteer program, in FY2025, MCASAC

had 82,899 hours of service from volunteers, with an estimated value of \$2,945,401.00. Additional staff to on-board and support volunteers would increase the number of volunteer hours.

In 2025, MCASAC began offering a limited number of low/cost spay and neuter surgeries to community dogs twice a month, and I wholeheartedly support additional funding and expansion as quickly and robustly as possible. Too many of the dogs that come in as either strays or owner surrenders have obviously had puppies. A robust community spay and neuter program would reduce the number of animals ending up at the shelter.

The need for a robust spay and neuter program aimed at reducing the number of unwanted animals, particularly large dogs, was brought home by MCASAC's press release of March 6, 2026. On that day, MCASAC asked the community for help because the shelter was at critical capacity for large dogs.

In addition to more staffing, to remedy the companion animal overpopulation, Montgomery County should also consider legislation to both reduce the number of unwanted dogs, and to keep dogs with their families. The County could evaluate the approach by the City of Philadelphia, which recently issued a three-year pause on backyard breeders. Details about the pause, and the corresponding news story, are linked below:

<https://acctphilly.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Philadelphia-Puppy-Breeding-and-Sales-Pause-FAQ.pdf>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/philadelphia-dog-breeding-bill-city-council-today/>

In FY2025, MCASAC saw a 41% increase in the number of owner surrenders (this number includes all companion animals, and not just large dogs). Housing policies are a major contributing factor to the surrender of dogs, both large and small. Removing breed and weight restrictions on companion animals, requiring pet deposits to be refundable if no damage from the animal occurs to the rental unit, and imposing standards to ensure reasonableness of the amount of deposits are a few policies that could reduce animal surrenders due to housing issues. The Opportunity Starts at Home campaign has shown the link between companion animal welfare and access to stable, affordable, pet-inclusive housing:

<https://www.opportunityhome.org/resources/companion-animal-welfare-advocates-are-housing-advocates/>

Colorado and Washington, DC, have already passed laws regulating companion animal fees in rental units:

<http://pawlorado.org/understanding-colorados-new-pet-friendly-housing-law-hb-25-1207/>

<https://bestfriends.org/who-we-are/media/congress-approves-dc-councils-pets-housing-amendment-act-2024>

Thank you for your past support of MCASAC, and please consider both increasing your support and taking steps to address the overpopulation of companion animals.

Sincerely,

Rebekah Young