



**Montgomery County Council
FY27 Operating Budget Hearing
Testimony
Gloria Aparicio Blackwell
Chair, Montgomery College Board of Trustees
April 7, 2026**

My name is Gloria Aparicio Blackwell. I am the chair of the Montgomery College Board of Trustees.

On behalf of the faculty, students, staff, and alumni here tonight—thank you!

The Board knows Montgomery County is facing real challenges—affordability, opportunity and inclusion chief among them.

And this is exactly when MC matters most—because Montgomery College works for this County.

Every day, we are on the front lines of your priorities.

We work to deliver affordable pathways for:

- displaced federal workers,
- veterans,
- student parents,
- recent high school graduates, and;
- any resident seeking to reskill or upskill.

We work to deliver a safe, welcoming place where people from every corner of this County can move toward opportunity.

And we work to deliver the workforce that keeps our economy moving.

Right now, more residents are turning to us—at rates exceeding state and national trends—because they need us. They need access to affordable high quality postsecondary education to unlock their potential.

To continue this momentum, to continue to deliver, we are requesting \$6.3 million—our first increase in four years.

We do not make this request lightly.

Our Board adopted a disciplined, same-services budget using state aid, tuition revenue, and maximum use of fund balance. It also includes a modest tuition increase—only the second since FY20—to help deepen the investment in our students and employees.

But we still need your help to deliver mission-critical basics:

- to deliver affordable tuition for the residents of this county,
- to provide fair, sustainable compensation for our faculty and staff aligned with Maryland higher education, and
- to hire part-time faculty—not full-time permanent positions—to meet demand.

This budget continues our fiscal partnership with you—a partnership evidenced by the fact that despite enrollment growth of 23% over the last 5 years, budget growth was limited to 12%.

Clearly, we have done our part.

And, you know that an investment in MC puts students on a path to economic mobility and changes the trajectory of countless lives.

So, I ask you to sustain what is working.

And what is working delivers results.

MC opens doors to opportunity with tuition that is half the cost of the University of Maryland—thanks to you.

And then our graduates stay here! In fact, 87% of our graduates stay here! For every dollar invested, students gain \$4.70 in lifetime earnings—and taxpayers see a \$1.20 return.

A \$6.3 million increase is not simply an expense—it is a strategic investment projected to generate more than \$7.5 million in direct value to the County, in addition to our \$1.4 billion total economic impact.

That is accountability.

That is a return on investment.

That is impact.

Tonight, we ask you to invest in MC to continue our work for Montgomery County—to deliver what works—exceptional education and extraordinary outcomes at an affordable price.

Thank you.