



April 9, 2026

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FY27 County Executive Legacy Renewals Award  
Montgomery County Council

Submitted by:

Jody Tick

Executive Director

Sunflower Bakery

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Honorable Council President Fani-Gonzalez and Members of the Council:

My name is Jody Tick and I am pleased to submit this testimony in strong support of Sunflower Bakery's FY27 County Executive Legacy Renewals Award as part of Montgomery County's FY27 budget.

Sunflower Bakery is a nonprofit social enterprise located in Rockville, Maryland. Through our working bakery and culinary kitchen, we use food as a tool to provide workforce development training and pre-employment exposure for young adults and teens with learning differences. Our programs focus on Pastry Arts, Hospitality, and Culinary Arts.

As part of our three-year strategic plan to expand enrollment and increase access to training, we piloted a Culinary Arts program in January 2024 and formally launched it in October 2025. To support this growth, we have leased an additional 4,100 square feet of commercial kitchen space on Lewis Avenue, just steps from our original Halpine Road location.

Sunflower Bakery has a strong track record of measurable impact. Over the past 17 years, we have served more than 650 individuals with learning differences many of whom are Montgomery County residents. Since relocating to Halpine Road in 2020, we have significantly scaled our programs, increasing our annual graduating class from 10 students to 46.

Our locations are accessible via public transportation, allowing us to operate both as a community-based business and a workforce training site. At the same time, we contribute to the local economy by producing kosher, vegan, and gluten-free baked goods and prepared foods.

Our impact extends well beyond our facilities. Sunflower graduates leave our programs prepared for employment and become contributing members of the workforce. To date, we have partnered with more than 70 employers across the DMV region, including several in Montgomery County such as Tatte Bakery & Café, Wegmans, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Coffee Republic, Woodmont Country Club, Fresh Baguette and many others.

Despite this progress, the need remains significant. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 6% of Rockville residents under age 65—roughly 38,000 individuals—have a disability.

Jody Tick

*Executive Director*

\*Co-founder, Ex-officio

These individuals are more than three times as likely to be unemployed compared to those without disabilities.

Sunflower Bakery exists to address this gap. Since our founding in 2009, our mission has remained consistent: to create meaningful pathways to employment for young adults with learning differences. Continued support through the County's Legacy grant is essential for sustaining and expanding this work.

We are making a long-term investment in Montgomery County. We respectfully ask the County to continue its investment in Sunflower Bakery. Together, we can expand opportunity, strengthen the workforce, and build a more inclusive local economy even in a challenging budget environment.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.