



Administration
 Engagement • Finance • Human Resources & Staff Development • Information Technology • Quality Assurance • Respite Coordination
 7362 Calhoun Place
 Rockville, MD 20855

Adult Services
Inclusive Living
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Employment & Day
 Employment & Meaningful Day
 7362 Calhoun Place
 Rockville, MD 20855

Children & Youth Services
After All
 4140 Wexford Drive
 Kensington, MD 20895
KFICCC
 10611 Tenbrook Drive
 Silver Spring, MD 20901

Urban Thrift
 10730 Connecticut Avenue
 Kensington, MD 20895
301.984.5777

www.TheArcMontgomeryCounty.org

April 6, 2026

Dear Council President Fani-Gonzalez and members of the Council,

I am testifying on behalf of the Children’s Opportunity Alliance, whose outstanding work in advocacy, consensus building, and data collection has been invaluable in supporting the work we do. The Arc Montgomery County operates the only fully inclusive childcare and education center in our county, “KFICCC”, located in Silver Spring. On behalf of all families with young children, we thank the County Council for the work that has been done to support children and their families in recent years. The Equicare Program, for families of infants with disabilities and who do not qualify for the state Child Care Scholarship, Working Parent Assistance (WPA), and Wraparound Funding for PreK parents give many families the opportunity to enroll their children in high quality care, allowing parents to work and helping children be ready for a wonderful kindergarten experience. We feel a special responsibility to advocate on behalf of the 20% of families who have a child with a disability or special health care need.

All three programs need more support. I grow weary of telling parents of children with rare genetic disorders, epilepsy, and a myriad of other needs that our waiting lists are closed, all the scholarship seats are filled, and that sadly there are no other programs to which I can refer them. Research cited in a September 2024 article in Forbes Magazine points out that the cost of raising a child with a disability averages \$2.5 million over the life of the child, nearly 10 times that of parenting a child without a disability. This does not include the lost income for families who must have a parent stay home with a child because they cannot find affordable care. As 1 in 5 children has a disability or a special health care need, this situation impacts a large number of families. With the Maryland Childcare Scholarship frozen for almost a full year now, parents have few options available.

We ask the county to consider the following:

Equicare: We always have Equicare families waiting for a seat at KFICCC. We have 12 seats but could fill many more. All of our Equicare families have children with disabilities, and in many cases also have an income below 400% of the poverty index. While Equicare applications are open again, we were told we could not apply for more seats despite the fact that there are no other centers equipped to work with children who need on-site nursing care from a pediatric nurse.

Wraparound: The cancellation of the Wraparound program has left us once again losing funding on our PreK seats. We pride ourselves on charging tuition in the mid-level range for our county. The expanded PreK reimbursement of \$19,950 per child does not equal the tuition we must



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charge. We are a 12-month program, funded by MSDE via the PreK grant at a 10-month level. The end of the Wraparound program means we have no funding for these children for the summer. While we encourage families to apply for the newly re-opened Working Parent Assistance, some families are not working because the parent has a disability, is a teenager or has some other circumstance that prevents them from seeking employment. Having the child stay home for the summer and return to us in the fall or leave our program and sit at home until kindergarten begins are poor solutions, as we cannot fill those seats for just two months.

Working Parent Assistance: Many parents are benefitting from this program. We would urge the council to take a look at the qualifications to see if teen parents, parents with disabilities who cannot work, etc. might be considered here.

We also ask the council to understand that our organization is excellent at advocating for and supporting children with disabilities and their families because of our support for adults with disabilities. Extensive, documented problems with DDA funding and the full-scale dismantling of the Department of Education and attack on Section 504 are attacks on the future of the children who are currently entrusted to our care. The research is very clear: early intervention and education such as we provide is the best way to prepare children with disabilities and special health care needs for kindergarten, with subsequent gains in their academic progress for the remainder of their life and a reduction in the cost of special education services throughout their school career.

Without proper funding and encouragement, many programs cannot embrace the work of supporting and enrolling such children and many families cannot navigate the system to find the medical and educational supports their children need. Parents cannot seek employment, and children are ill-prepared to take advantage of an MCPS education.

There are few investments that can yield the same return as that of helping a parent to find a job while a child receives exceptional early intervention support. Improving funding to Equicare, Working Parent Assistance, and Wraparound is a way to make such an investment.

Sincerely,

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