

Dear County Council,

I am writing today as the proud dad of two neurodivergent kids, one of whom was just diagnosed with Autism. I say proud while also recognizing the sheer exhaustion and toll it takes on myself (chronically ill), my husband, and our youngest neurodivergent child. As parents, we can best help our children when we are at our best or at the very least, feel we are able to keep our heads above water. I cried tears of relief when I learned about Montgomery County's respite program and that we would be provided for up to 140 hours annually of in-home respite services. To families like mine, that is a lifeline when we are in survival mode every day. I recently became aware that due to funding constraints, those hours will be reduced to up to 120 hours. For my family, that means 4 less days per year of support. While that may seem small to those outside of my house, those 4 days of additional support means we are not on our own keeping everyone in our house safe, supported, and ensuring that my husband and I are not burnt out to the point of being unable to provide the man on man coverage that is constantly required in our house to support our children regardless of the cost to our health. As a family unit needing the 140 hours, I urge you to please reconsider the reduction of hours and restore them to the 140 hours for this next fiscal year. Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Adam Schuster