

WORKING DRAFT---JOINT LETTER TO ELRICH

Dear County Executive Elrich:

The MCPL has developed a three-year strategic plan that aims at increasing equity of access and opportunity. While our libraries have always been available to all our residents not all of our residents know this, and thus do not know what the libraries can do for them and their families. This is particularly true for low-income families of color, especially immigrants recently arrived in the county.

The plan points out that one third of Montgomery County resident were born outside the United States and that they face disparities in housing, education, employment. Some of this disparity comes from not knowing what opportunities and resources are available in the county. The MCPL is determined to make sure that this is no longer the case for what our libraries have to offer.

The MCPL leadership plans an enhanced effort to reach out to all our disadvantaged groups so that they might know and use the life-enhancing and materials our libraries offer. They will concentrate on increasing participation in early childhood literacy programs that improve kindergarten readiness and programs for teenagers heading for careers and college. They will also work to let everyone know that our libraries offer free instruction in and access to digital technologies.

The MCPL leadership has recently hired an Assistant Director to develop and implement this outreach initiative. His success will depend on adequate funding. You and your administration have always been foresighted in your funding for MCPL; this outreach effort will require that, and perhaps a bit more.

Staffing will be crucial, and we urge that you provide MCPL with what funding it needs to implement this effort and that you maintain the current lapse requirements.

We also urge you to review county recruitment procedures as they pertain to MCPL to see if some changes can be made in regulations and procedure to speed up hiring.

More specifically, as you work with MCPL to develop the FY 24 budget we ask that you consider the funding needed to:

- Ensure that all branches, especially in less affluent areas, have a robust selection of childhood literacy programs;
- Provide for increased teenage use of the collections and participation in programs;
- Enhance the Spanish and Chinese collections and
- Ensure sufficient staff and material for increased access to digital programs and equipment.

The pandemic revealed and aggravated long standing racial and social disparities. As we can see, our libraries' leadership and staff are determined to do something about this. We recognize that you have provided well-considered support for MCPL's programs and initiatives in the past and we ask that you now provide the support MCPL needs to increase participation across the county in their programs. This will benefit us all for years to come.

Thank You,

Tim Lighter and Pam Saussy

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Please send your comments to: jmassoc@verizon.net