

**TESTIMONY -- Montgomery County FY20 Recommend Operating Budget**

**April 8, 2019**

**League of Women Voters of Montgomery County**

The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County (LWVMC) recognizes the many hours of consideration in the development of Montgomery County's FY20 Operating Budget so that the County can more readily meet growing challenges in our diverse community.

Please initially note the following considerations:

- It is important to take a historical look at the difference in how various financial units may have been used in past budgets and extra requests when considering across the board reductions.
- Moreover, it is unfair to make cuts in the following types of situations: (1) when people have been initially more frugal than the funding provided and (2) some funding to maintain is needed or else Montgomery County loses its initial policy and property investment.

Our specific comments (below) on behalf of our members focus on key issues under (1) Voting, (2) Education, (3) Housing, and (4) Environment.

**Voting**

**The League supports the extra expenditures requested by the Board of Elections to meet the Council and Board of Election's goal of one hour or less wait for voting lines.** Much of this expenditure is for voter education: e.g., early voting sites are NOT open on election day. Especially busy precincts require extra staffing and check-in machines (Note: Maryland is not replacing the current model in 2020).

**Education**

Since we recognize that the period from birth to five is a crucial one in a child's development, **we strongly support funding in the MCPS budget to expand the number of full-day slots in the Pre-K and HeadStart programs** by 600 children in high need areas. We also support the **increased funding for special education services at the pre-K level and to better meet the needs of autistic students.**

**We continue to support the funding needed to continue to provide the high-quality education - for which the county is known - to our growing student body and are glad to see plans for expansion of career programs in new fields** where there are jobs **and to multiple locations**, making them more accessible to students who live in the UpCounty area.

### **Housing**

**The League of Women Voters supports County policies and programs designed to increase the supply of affordable housing.** The Housing Initiative Fund (HIF) is fundamental to this effort. As such, we are very pleased to see the 16 percent increase in the Fund proposed in the Executive's budget. We urge the Council to adopt this increase in the final budget or even to add to it.

**We also urge the Council to agree to fund the two vacant code enforcement positions.** We believe that strong code enforcement is vital to ensuring the quality of life for both tenants and their neighbors.

Finally, we're glad to see (1) increased funding for services to prevent or end homelessness and (2) a new program for seniors.

### **Environment**

**We appreciate the modest increases** in the budgets for Solid Waste Services and Environmental Protection. **We hope that some of this funding will be applied specifically to create better public understanding and participation.**

Thank you for encouraging Montgomery County residents to participate in county decision-making.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Bliss, President  
Linda Silversmith, Action Co-Vice President  
Adrienne McBride, Action Co-Vice President

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ABOUT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of MONTGOMERY COUNTY: Members promote good government through nonpartisan, grassroots volunteer work. Members examine issues, educate citizens, register voters, and participate in advocacy. Membership includes affiliation with the League of Women Voters of Maryland and the League of Women Voters of the United States.