



Budget Testimony
Wednesday, April 5, 2017

Good afternoon Council President Berliner and Councilmembers.

My name is Brigid Howe and today I'm speaking with you as the Executive Director of Nonprofit Montgomery, an alliance of 130 nonprofit organizations. Together we provide food, shelter, affordable housing, clothing, diapers, counseling, medical, dental, and mental health care, job training, legal services, after-school programs, and much more to our neighbors. We are conveners and active participants in civic life, encourage social justice, and fight for the recognition of the most vulnerable among us.

The county's partnership and investment help us leverage additional investments that allow nonprofits to employ 10% of our county's workforce and collectively reach half of our million-plus population with programs that provide a safety net, build community, and address the economic opportunity gap for our residents. This contributes to our county's economic sustainability.

Colleagues from Nonprofit Montgomery member organizations have already shared their compelling stories of the work they do, the clients they serve, and the impact they have. Nonprofits truly reach our county's diverse population, supporting residents at all stages, through any number of challenges and opportunities.

While the county continues a steady path toward recovery from the recession, funding for these essential services has not kept pace with the real costs to deliver them, which will continue to rise from external pressures such as the pending minimum wage increase, shifts in philanthropy, and new insurance requirements. Additionally, we are on the threshold of devastating changes to how essential human services are funded through the federal budget.

Through years of decreases or minimal increases, county nonprofits have had to scale back addressing organizational infrastructure needs in order to prioritize direct service. This means computer systems are aging, staff development is left behind, evaluation is underfunded, creativity is stifled, and offices are bursting at the seams. This weakens the foundation of our services.

In order to assure that we are not balancing the county's budget on the backs of the most vulnerable, and those that serve them, we respectfully request that the Council restore the 1% cut to Health and Human Services contracts, and also include a 3% adjustment for nonprofit contracts across all departments.

Additionally, I am going to speak to the Community Grants, which are an important way that nonprofit organizations receive support to deliver essential services and innovate new programs to meet emerging needs. In fact, many nonprofits receive their only county funding through Community Grants. As the pool has grown in previous years, so has the demand.

We strongly support a process for moving programs providing essential services that are routinely funded through grants into the base budget after five years. We also applaud the attention the Council has paid in the past few months to simplifying the contracting process for Community Grants. We welcome the opportunity to partner with you on continued improvements to help our community thrive.

Thank you for your time today. Your support of the nonprofit sector is greatly valued.

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