

Good afternoon, my name is Gayl Selkin Gutman and I am representing the Rockville Library Advisory Committee (LAC).

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am here to express our library community's support for the special appropriation for the Rockville Parking District to reimburse the City for the cost of patrons' parking at the Rockville Library.

In April 2006, after significant input and deliberation, the County Council adopted a policy that Montgomery County library patrons will be able to park for free near all of the county's libraries. This policy ensures that all county residents have equal access to their libraries. The Rockville LAC seeks to encourage library use, and we support the policy that ensures free parking at all county libraries.

Library usage has increased during the current recession. Many daytime library patrons, volunteers (like me); senior citizens on fixed incomes, the poor or the special needs population (whose collection was relocated to the Rockville Library) have come to depend on this guarantee of equal access to parking for library use. It would be counterproductive to put up a financial barrier to library use – especially now when job seekers, individuals and families looking to conserve need and use our libraries even more.

Whenever I'm at the Rockville Library I am frequently struck by the many visitors who clearly put forth considerable effort just to get there. There are the disabled, the volunteers and the parents with young children in twin strollers, lugging heavy book bags...would they all keep coming if they had the added barrier of having to pay for parking? I love volunteering at my library, but I'm not sure I would relish having to pay for that privilege. A couple of weeks ago, while I was sorting books for the FOL used book sale, a mother came in with her young son – dragging a wagonload of books to donate. I wonder if they would've brought them if they had to pay to park first.

The recently built Rockville Library would stand to lose a significant number of patrons if paid parking were to be instituted. This beautiful new facility could quickly become an underused facility. Certainly, no one wants that to happen.

These are some of the reasons why the Rockville LAC would like to reiterate its support for keeping parking free at all of our County's libraries. At the moment, to comply with its previously adopted policy, the County has an obligation to honor its commitment to fund parking at the Rockville library, as it does throughout the library system. The County Council has consistently recognized the importance of providing the best library service possible to our county residents. The Rockville LAC strongly recommends continuing this support by adopting the special appropriation under consideration today.

Thank you again for your continued support of all of our Montgomery County libraries.