

**TESTIMONY OF ANN DOROUGH, PRESIDENT, FRIENDS  
OF THE LIBRARY, MONTGOMERY COUNTY,  
MD BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
COUNCIL April 13, 2008**

My name is Ann Dorough. I live in District 1. I am honored to serve as President of the Friends of the Library, Montgomery County. In FY2009 our 5,100 members and 15 Chapters hosted hundreds of literary and cultural programs and contributed approximately a quarter-million dollars to Montgomery County libraries for programs, training, and technology. Here are just a few highlights:

--We funded the most successful Summer Reading Program ever, serving 29,000 children.

--We approved funding in the amount of \$17,500 for Children's Early Literacy workstations, providing technology that introduces kids to reading in an exciting new way.

--We provided receipt printers to all branches, which will save MCPL \$15,000 a year and provide a greener checkout process.

--We funded a special system-wide initiative to coordinate, schedule and publicize literary and cultural programs. This new strategy brings popular events to under-served branches, prevents duplication of effort, and saves money. Though we are proud to be of service to the libraries, the Friends can provide only a fraction of the total support that Montgomery County libraries need. It is the County's role to fund basic library services: Keep the doors open. Keep reference experts on hand. Keep the level of customer service high. We know that this year the Council faces more painful choices than ever, so we deeply appreciate that this budget proposal keeps all branches open, and maintains hours. But unfortunately, library staffing takes a big hit in this budget. The FY2009 budget eliminated 9 positions and cut the substitute staff budget by 15%. Now, the FY2010 budget proposes to cut MCPL another 6.1%, which means another 13 full-time and 27

part-time positions are targeted to be cut. Add in 11 retirements to be unfilled and 2 RIFs, and you have a total of 53 positions eliminated out of a workforce of just 231 full-time and 197 part time workers.

Unfortunately, these significant cuts come at a time of greater customer demand. Circulation rose 3% last fall compared to the same period the year before. Library visits are on the rise, and the average number of books checked out per resident is also on the rise. Greater dependence on libraries is due in part to increased population, but also, we see changes to usage patterns due to the recession. As families are forced to economize, they cut back on cable TV, high-speed internet, movie night, and trips to the bookstore. Instead, they rely on library technology, collections, and programs more than ever. The library is their first stop for affordable entertainment, information and internet access. Meanwhile, the library is a critical resource for our growing corps of the unemployed, who come to their local branches to brush up skills, get employer information, find leads, write resumes, and apply for jobs. They rely on library staff to get the tools they need. Cutting library staff further doesn't only hurt libraries, it delays getting folks back to work and paying taxes, which in turn slows down our economic recovery. At least 60 percent of county residents use the libraries each year, and they have only 428 library employees (the full-time equivalent of 388 staffers) to serve them as it is. Unfortunately, after the staffing cuts, residents will wait longer in lines; they won't get all their questions answered as promptly as before; and they won't find all the items on the shelf they need, when they need them. MCPL has a 96% approval rating from patrons, according to the latest customer survey. I am sure that more than 96% of the Council approves of the job our superb library system does. So please make sure the libraries get the resources to do their job right, and do right by our residents who need and use them. Thank you very much for your consideration of these comments.