

FOLMC Testimony , County Council, April 12, 2012

Good afternoon Mr. President and Council Members

I am Carol Leahy, President of the Friends of the Library Montgomery County

We thank you for your support and interest in our organization in this 30th anniversary year of our founding.

We urge you to support the 9.5 (,6?) increase in the library budget proposed by the County Executive.

During the past 3? 4? years the library budget has taken more major cuts than any other County organization, resulting in a budget slashed from \$40, 000,000 to \$29, 000,000.

Results of these cuts include reductions in staff positions, causing far reaching effects, such as not enough staff to continue collaborations with the County Public School System, no support for early literacy, fewer open hours at many branches, sparse staff , and insufficient funds to purchase and maintain our collections, and many more..

Sixty percent of our County residents hold library cards. Today's library is not the hushed cathedral of my youth, presided over by stern librarians who allowed not a whisper, but a vibrant, interactive, bright and welcoming haven for those who need not only to borrow a book, cd or dvd, but to learn to use a computer to enhance their chance of finding a new job, or to use the computer to search for that job, or for students to do homework in a safe environment, for newcomers to our country to learn our language, for the lonely to join a book club and make new friends, to take a class, hold a meeting, listen to a local author discuss his/her book—I could go on and on.

To do all this, we must ask that you continue to restore library funds, as you did for FY2012 which has allowed the restoration of some services. We need to restore more than just some so that we can continue to improve the quality of life for our County residents.

On October 5, 2011, we held "Snapshot Day", a day in the life of Montgomery County Libraries. On that day, 16,099 visitors came to the libraries, information staff answered 3,676 questions, 397 people

attended VIP reads, classes or other programs, 25,564 items were checked out, there were 5,652 database retrievals and 27 workforce assistance actions—resumes, job application, career guidance or small business help.

Surely this tells you the importance of our libraries in the lives of our residents and surely you will want to see this importance continue, grow and improve.

Libraries still matter, please continue to build them up!