

Statement of Jill Lewis  
Chair, Montgomery County Library Board  
Montgomery County Council Hearing on FY 2012 Budget  
April 10, 2012

President Berliner and members of the Council,

I'm Jill Lewis, chair of the Montgomery County Library Board. Thank you for the opportunity to spend a couple of minutes with you tonight.

It was just about a year ago that the Library Board came here with a simple message. Libraries Matter. No More Cuts. We and the hundreds of thousands of library users from across Montgomery County are very grateful that you heard us and that you restored some funds to the Montgomery County Public Libraries, which had been decimated over the last four years.

Tonight, I and others are here with a new message. Libraries Still Matter Build Them Up. We are thankful that you have started that process through the Capital Improvements Budget, but when we ask for libraries to be built up, we mean more than physical buildings.

We need to build up the collections of books and electronic resources. We need to build up the staff to help our patrons. We need to build up the hours to make our services more available to the people who come to our libraries every day.

Thanks to you, we are starting to make progress. In the materials budget alone, we were able to provide a 37% increase in materials for children; a 46% increase in materials for adults. The libraries increased its purchase of eBooks. The demands for eBooks continue to grow from our residents while the cost continues to increase. Additional money is needed to meet these demands as well as for print and other online resources.

The new funds also helped to cover the increased cost of databases and added a new children's language database. The standard ratio of holds dropped from eight patrons per book to five per book, and often lower.

But I need to emphasize the money added last year was just a start. This year, Executive Leggett has shown his support for libraries by including a 9.6 percent increase over a year ago. We urge you to follow his recommendations and even, if you can, add to it.

The fact is, our libraries are still needed more than ever. People still come to the library as a quiet place to do homework. They come to apply for jobs, or to study to take on new professions. They come because they can, as most libraries are accessible by public transportation.

I want to close by sharing a story from Jill Brantley, the fabulous chairman of our Wheaton Library Advisory Committee. Wheaton LAC members have been interviewing patrons about the library. Jill

talked with a man who appeared to be about 60 years old. He reads a great deal of history—Civil War, World War II, and John F. Kennedy. In the course of the conversation, he said, “You know who really gets a good use of the library are the homeless people.” Jill said, “Yes and I hope to talk to them.” He said, “I am homeless right now.”

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He explained that he had lost his job because of depression, was living in a shelter, and trying to get transition housing. The library is one place he can come during the day. He is having difficulties obtaining his benefits, and the library, for him, is one place that shows the County understands the needs of its citizens.

Thank you for your attention.