Resolution No.: 20-1044
Introduced: January 13, 2026
Adopted: February 24, 2026

**COUNTY COUNCIL**
**FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

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Lead Sponsor: Councilmember Sayles
Co-sponsors: Council President Fani-González, Councilmember Katz, Councilmember Mink, and Councilmember Jawando

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**SUBJECT**: Special Appropriations to the Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget Montgomery County Government, Department of Health and Human Services: Respite Care Program, $250,000; Senior Nutrition Program, $450,000; and Homecare Services - Social Services to Adults, $300,000 (Source: General Fund Undesignated Reserves)

## Background

1. Section 308 of the Montgomery County Charter provides that a special appropriation: (a) may be made at any time after public notice by news release; (b) must state that the special appropriation is necessary to meet an unforeseen disaster or other emergency or to act without delay in the public interest; (c) must specify the revenues necessary to finance it; and (d) must be approved by no fewer than seven members of the Council.

2. Montgomery County has experienced significant impacts from policy changes at the federal level. Reductions in federal and state grant funding have constrained the County's ability to deliver essential social and medical services, limiting critical supports for residents.

3. As part of its mission, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) helps safeguard community health and supports residents' well-being. It provides essential public health programs, healthcare services, and a wide range of social supports for individuals and families.

4. The ongoing lapse in reauthorization of the Older Americans Act (OAA) has weakened critical supports for older adults in Montgomery County and nationwide, exacerbating service gaps amid increasing demand. Older adults, especially those from historically underserved and marginalized communities, continue to face disproportionate barriers to health care, housing stability, and social services, compounding long-standing inequities. Targeted investments and sustained support for culturally responsive programs are

necessary to mitigate these impacts and ensure equitable access to essential services for all older residents.

5. The Council seeks to augment the federal reductions to DHHS services by reducing the waitlist for respite care services, restoring enhanced access to senior meals, and reopening intake for the Homecare Services program. It will help strengthen health equity for minority residents, prevent hunger and isolation among seniors, stabilize essential care systems facing Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) disruptions, and ensure continuity of services for thousands of vulnerable residents.

6. The County Council has determined that the following FY26 appropriations are necessary to address the economic impact from the Federal Government reductions:

| Appropriate To | Personnel Costs | Operating Expenses | Total | Source of Funds |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health and Human Services | $0 | $1,000,000 | $1,000,000 | General Fund Undesignated Reserves |

7. This resolution allocates these special appropriations as follows:

   a. $250,000 is appropriated to the Respite Care program to expand access to temporary, short-term support for unpaid family caregivers who provide ongoing care to frail older adults. The respite program provides families with up to 140 hours of respite services per fiscal year. Demand for the County's Respite Care program has consistently exceeded available resources. For multiple consecutive years, the program has maintained a waitlist and has routinely been closed to new participants after only 6–7 months of the fiscal year. As of December 2025, the program closed to new applications due to insufficient funding. Budget limitations have constrained the program's reach, with 474 families served in FY24, 562 families served in FY25, and 595 families served in FY26. This funding will provide a total of 7,575 additional Respite hours.

   b. $450,000 is appropriated to the Senior Nutrition program to support seniors in the County. From FY20 to FY25, the Senior Nutrition Program relied on approximately $3 million in one-time COVID-19 federal funding, which temporarily increased the overall program budget by 48 percent. The loss of this funding resulted in a reduction in appropriations to culturally appropriate meal sites. At the same time, demand for meals continues to grow, food costs have escalated, and operational disruptions have intensified financial strain. As a result, the Senior Nutrition Program had to close enrollment to new congregate meal participants in FY25, limiting access to a critical safety-net service for older adults. There are currently 141 new participants who wish to join the program that are on the waitlist.

c. $300,000 is appropriated to Homecare Services - Social Services to Adults (SSTA) and In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) programs. There is currently a waitlist of 315 individuals awaiting assessment for much-needed in-home supports, which are critical for aging in place. HomeCare is state and locally funded and not supported by Medicaid. Medicaid recipients are not eligible for the HomeCare program.

8. The public was notified of these special appropriations by a news release, and a public hearing was held.

**Action**

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution:

1. Special appropriations to the FY26 Operating Budget are as follows:

| Appropriate To | Personnel Costs | Operating Expenses | Total | Source of Funds |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Health and Human Services | $0 | $1,000,000 | $1,000,000 | General Fund Undesignated Reserves |

2. The special appropriations must be used as follows:

a. $250,000 is appropriated to the Respite Care program to expand access to temporary, short-term support for unpaid family caregivers who provide ongoing care to frail older adults.

b. $450,000 is appropriated to the Senior Nutrition program to support seniors in the County.

c. $300,000 is appropriated to Homecare Services - Social Services to Adults (SSTA) and In-Home Aide Services (IHAS) programs.

3. The County Council declares that this resolution for special appropriations is necessary to act without delay in the public interest.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Sara R. Tenenbaum
Clerk of the Council