



## Friends of the Library, Montgomery County and Montgomery County Library Board

### **FY2021 Advocacy Toolkit**



**\*Photo Courtesy of Montgomery County Public Libraries**

## **Introduction**

The Library Board and FOLMC have produced this Advocacy Tool Kit for FY 2021. The Kit also includes the Library Board and FOLMC Joint Paper on Budget Priorities for MCPL as transmitted to County Executive Marc Elrich.

The Advocacy Toolkit was produced by a working group of people from both organizations; Sonja Roberts, Jensen Chiu, Brandon Rippeon, Toni Negro, and Dan Melnick from the Library Board and Tom Thomson, Ari Brooks, Lysette House, Fred Evans, Laura Rich, Carla Satinsky, Gary Berg-Cross, Chuck Na, and Jim Montgomery from the FOLMC Advocacy Committee.

This document was presented to a gathering of library-loving advocates from across the County hosted by the Library Board and FOLMC on January 8, 2020. During a lively discussion, there was agreement on the priorities. Participants also contributed useful comments and suggestions on how we might best proceed. We also agreed that we should be prepared to review and adjust our presentations as the budget process unfolds and that we would keep the membership of both organizations, including the Library Advisory Committees and FOLMC Chapters informed.

## **What is in This Tool Kit**

This document provides information we hope you will find useful as you approach decision makers to ask them to support our FY 2021 budget priorities.

It contains the following:

- Position Paper on Priorities;
- Suggested Talking points;
- Information about the key people in the county's decision-making process;
- Information about the new budget procedures that the County will use for the FY2021 budget and how these procedures effect what we need to do to gain support; and
- Recommendations as to near-term actions we all can take.

## **Background**

On March 7, 2019, Mr. Elrich the County Executive and Nancy Navarro then the Council President announced the Early Child Care and Education Initiative designed to get more of our children ready for kindergarten. They pointed out that a recent survey showed that only 54 percent of children entering kindergarten were ready. Mr. Elrich said that, "Having so many of our kindergartners enter school two years behind has serious implications. We know that there is a critical link between early childhood education and brain development, and we know that investing in ECE yields huge, long- term dividends for our children and the rest of society. Starting with kids early must be a top priority – it's one of those few things we can identify that has the potential to be a real game changer."

Our position paper points out that early childhood literacy is key to changing this "game" and that the library is making a significant contribution in this area. It asks that the Executive's budget include monies for an additional children's librarian to reach out to even more parents and caregivers and get them to start reading to their young children.

## **Our Priorities**

We support the County Executive's and County Council's priorities of equity and getting more of our children ready for kindergarten. Mr. Elrich said repeatedly in his budget forums that kindergarten readiness remains his number one priority. The council in FY 2020 budget set aside \$7 million to start implementation. We ask that the County Executive and County Council:

- Recognize the Role that the MCPL already plays in modeling good reading practices for parents and caregivers of very young children and reinforce them;
- Add money for an additional librarian who will reach out to the underserved parts of the county's population with these services; and
- Provide money so MCPL can provided uniform hours across all its branches, to include programs on Sunday.

## **FOLMC and Library Board Joint Position Paper on FY2021 Operating Budget**

We agree wholeheartedly with the county government's determination that we conduct governmental business equitably and use appropriate outcome indicators. In particular, we need better outreach to assure that underserved groups are encouraged to use government services. Our county's increasing diversity certainly requires this.

Our libraries are well suited to contribute to this effort. They open their doors to everyone and contribute significantly to solving one of the county's enduring inequities—the Achievement Gap, a condition that falls most heavily on minorities and lower income groups.

The Executive and the Council have correctly concluded with the March 7 initiative that getting more of our children ready for kindergarten is the best way to attack this inequity. Research shows that children who are read to every day from birth to kindergarten by their caregivers are significantly more ready for kindergarten than those who are not. Furthermore, this reading is most productive from birth through three.

Our libraries already address these preschool years with hundreds of literacy programs every month that encourage caregivers to do such reading by conducting reading programs on-site and providing caregivers with books to take home and read to their children.

According to County Statistics, caregivers for children under five have doubled the rate at which they use child related library resources and programs over the last five years.

With 46% of our youngsters not ready for kindergarten, the need to increase that rate with additional outreach is clear. This will require more resources, in the first instance a new librarian charged with reaching out to all parts of the childcare community, particularly those communities that may not yet know about the libraries enhancing literacy programs. We need to get that curve headed up again to cut into that 46% and with additional resources the MCPL can do so. This will mean more children read to, thus more children ready for kindergarten.

As Mr. Elrich has said many times, “Just imagine being five years old and already two years behind.” Each additional child that is brought into our libraries' sustaining circle of early literacy, is one less child likely to be faced with that predicament, a brutal predicament that can endure throughout his or her school years.

We therefore ask for funding for an additional librarian charged with reaching out to all our childcare communities, making the parents and caregivers aware of the life-changing early literacy programs and resources they offer. Furthermore, we believe these needs are so urgent that funding for this new librarian should be found, in the first instance, in the \$7 million fund the Council has already appropriated to support kindergarten readiness.

We also believe money should be found in FY 2021 to make our libraries more available to more people. Many from lower income groups and minorities work long, irregular hours and

can get to the libraries only on the weekend. While some of our branches are open on Sunday, they offer limited service and do not provide literacy and other programs. Thus, we urge that money be found to have all branches opened for eight hours on Sunday with the same programs now conducted on weekdays.

Finally, so that everyone across the county can schedule their activities easily, we ask that money be found so that all library branches can have the same hours. People should not have to waste precious time searching the patchwork of different schedules in different branches.

## **Metrics**

To see if these enhancements are effective, we suggest MCPL and MCPS make the following refinements in their measurements, using existing data—enhanced with newly collected information to:

1. Use the count of students who received Free and Reduced Price Meals by school together with suggestions from MCPS, DHHS and other partners to select areas in the county that need intervention to improve prekindergarten readiness. These would be the initial places where MCPL would concentrate its efforts at outreach.
2. Report the number of children who participate in reading readiness activities outside of the formal library settings but served by the library staff as well as those who attend storytime and other activities in the branches.
3. Count the children and parents or caregivers who participate in reading readiness activities and the materials circulated in support of this goal.
4. Ask the Montgomery County Public Schools to include a data item on the MCPS form used for school registration that asks the parents of children entering Kindergarten or First Grade if they have used the MCPL or participated in a program run by the MCPL staff for their children. This information can be aggregated by the child's school to identify areas needing additional outreach to young children.

Over time, these measures should tell us if more children are being read to in such a way as to make them more ready for kindergarten and show how these efforts are addressing the problem of uneven readiness for kindergarten.

## **The Budget Process and Who to Approach**

Under Mr. Elrich the budget process is changing. He already started to conduct his budget forums across the county earlier than in previous years. Also, we understand that this year the County Executive may involve county employees in pre-decisional review committees to consider proposals from various agencies to enhance their budgets. Thus, it would make good sense to promote our priorities to any county employees you may encounter as they may be asked to serve on a pertinent review body.

The County Council will take up the budget after Mr. Elrich makes his formal proposal on March 16. At that point, if Mr. Elrich has accepted our priorities, we will ask council members to do likewise. If he has not, we will ask the council members to put them into the budget during the reconciliation process. Until March 16, we should use every encounter with council members and executive branch officials to advocate the idea that modest additional resources for our libraries would contribute significantly to getting more kids ready for kindergarten.

The County Council will kick off its budget work in early April by conducting a series of hearings where any resident can apply to testify for three minutes. These sessions are well attended. Last year the Council held five sessions and heard testimony from over 200 people. If you apply to speak and do not get a slot, you can submit written testimony. The Council staff takes the testimony, both written and oral, into account when analyzing their parts of the budget and often includes the text of selected testimonies in their back-up documents. The Council will make its final budget decisions in May.

You should take all opportunities to discuss our priorities with any member of the Council. However, there are several members who are especially pertinent to libraries, specifically, the members of the Education and Culture committee who are responsible for the MCPL budget. These are Craig Rice, Chairman of that committee, Nancy Navarro and Will Jawando. Mr. Jawando is particularly important as his colleagues have designated him the Council's "Lead" on library matters.

Approaches to Mr. Elrich and other members of the executive will be most pertinent between now and their final decisions which we will see on March 16.

Should you have the opportunity, you should make our points to Mr. Elrich himself and, in addition to these people in the executive offices:



Richard Madaleno

Director, Office of Management and Budget



Andrew Kleine

Chief Administrative Officer

Richard Madaleno, Before taking this position, Mr. Madaleno was a long-time state senator from Montgomery County, known in Annapolis for his budget expertise.

Andrew Kleine, Mr. Kleine is considered the intellectual engine behind the evolving budget procedures. He focuses on outcomes. He spells out his thinking in his book, City on the Line. Copies are available in our libraries.

BB Otero, a Special Assistant in Mr. Elrich's office with responsibility for implementing the Early Child Care and Education Initiative of March 7.

Dale Tibbitts, a Special Assistant in Mr. Elrich's office with broad responsibilities.

The Montgomery County budget process is open. The people who implement it are generally accessible as they appear at many events across the county and we have found them and their staff quite ready to listen to any resident who approaches them.

It is important to keep your presentation brief and to the procedural point. Make sure your listener understands what "The Ask" is, what it is specifically you want the official to do. For instance, you don't ask for "...more support for libraries," you say, "Please support budget money for a new children's librarian or please support money for uniform hours and programming for all MCPL branches."

If you do have a chance to make your point, we recommend following it up with a thank you note that also reiterates your basic point.

Finally, if you can't find an official, make our case to anyone who will listen. We can't have too many people agreeing with us.

# Montgomery County Executive and County Council

## County Executive

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/>



**Marc Elrich (D)\***

## County Council

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/>



**At-Large  
Hans Riemer (D)**



**At-Large  
Gabe Albornoz (D)\***



**At-Large  
Evan Glass (D)\***



**At-Large  
Will Jawando (D)**  
*Lead to Libraries*



**District 1  
Andrew Friedson (D)**



**District 2  
Craig Rice (D)**



**District 3  
Sidney Katz (D)**  
*County Council President*



**District 4  
Nancy Navarro (D)**



**District 5  
Tom Hucker (D)**  
*County Council Vice President*

### **Example of What You Might Say**

Many times, you will only have a few moments to say what is important. If you get the opportunity you can add a personal touch. But please keep it brief so that what you say will be remembered. Below are some suggested points you might find useful

Hello, I'm **[your name]** with the **[Library Board/or Friends of the Library, Montgomery County]**. The Library Board and the Friends of the Library, Montgomery County are working to support Mr. Elrich's initiative to get more children ready for kindergarten;

- The heart of this is childhood literacy: Parents and caregivers reading to children every day, starting at birth;
- Our libraries already run hundreds of programs a month to introduce caregivers and children to books and reading and they provide caregivers with books to take home and read aloud;
- More than 11,000 thousand kids will go to kindergarten in September, about half won't be ready. We can change that if we can get more caregivers to read to more kids;
- Please support money for a new outreach children's librarian to promote this;
- It will be a long time before we have the funding to put all the underserved kids in a formal child-care setting with full blown reading programs. More library outreach can help many of those waiting in that line.

## **Useful Websites**

Montgomery County Government: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov)

This Montgomery County government site is indispensable for any advocate in the county. If you have not already done so, we urge you to go to this site now, poke around, and find out all the useful information available there.

For instance, you can find texts of speeches and press announcements, notice of upcoming events, a comprehensive calendar of happenings across the county, how to send emails to officials, access to councilmember websites and their social media connections, the opportunity to participate in the County Executive's on-line townhalls and records of previous ones, the Council's schedule, access to the analytical documents the Council and its committees use, access to live and archived video of Council and committee hearings, apply to testify at a public hearing, and much more.

Montgomery County Public Libraries: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/)

Sign-up for the MCPL newsletter and check out their calendar to see just how many literacy and other programs the MCPL runs across the county.

Friends of the Library, Montgomery County: [www.folmc.org](http://www.folmc.org)

Sign-up for FOLMC newsletters and check out the latest news about MCPL and FOLMC events, that are often opportunities for advocacy. Send an email to [advocacy@folmc.org](mailto:advocacy@folmc.org) to be added to the list to receive the advocacy enews *In the Know*.

## Near Term Actions

We ask that each of you send an email drawing on the talking points above to one or more of the executive branch officials discussed above. If you can add a personal touch concerning your own experience with libraries and their childhood literacy efforts, please do so.

- Mr. Elrich, County Executive  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/Contactcex.aspx>
- Ms. BB Otero, Special Assistant to Mr. Elrich responsible for the March 7 initiative.  
BB.Otero@montgomerycountymd.gov
- Mr. Andrew Kleine, Chief Administrative Officer  
andrew.kleine@montgomerycountymd.gov
- Mr. Richard Madaleno, Budget Director  
You can reach Mr. Madaleno in care of Ms. Darlene Fairfax. She is at:  
darlene.fairfax@montgomerycountymd.gov
- Mr. Dale Tibbitts, Special Assistant to Mr. Elrich  
dale.tibbitts@montgomerycountymd.gov

Secondly, we ask that you then get one more person to send such an email to one of those officials.

If you have any questions in preparing the emails please feel free to contact us at [advocacy@folmc.org](mailto:advocacy@folmc.org)

Thirdly, we ask that you attend Mr. Elrich's monthly virtual town halls. His next session is tomorrow, Thursday, January 9th at 1:00PM. [Click here](#) to submit questions, watch live, or view previous sessions.

Fourth, we ask that you attend one of Councilmember Jawando's visits to the library branches. Here is a list of the upcoming sessions:

- Aspen Hill, Saturday, January 11th, 1:00PM-3:00PM
- Germantown, Monday, January 27th, 7:00PM-8:30PM
- Twinbrook, Tuesday, February 25th, 6:00PM-8:00PM
- Marilyn Praisner, Monday, March 9th, 7:00PM-8:30PM
- Davis Library, Monday, March 23rd, 6:00PM-8:00PM
- Little Falls, Wednesday, April 8th, 6:00PM-8:00PM
- Rockville Memorial, Monday, May 4th, 7:00PM-8:30PM
- Kensington Park, Monday, June 15th, 6:00PM-8:00PM