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**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT GOLDMAN, MHP PRESIDENT
FY 2020 OPERATING BUDGET
APRIL 10, 2019**

Good Afternoon Council President Navarro and members of the Council.

My name is Robert Goldman and I am the President of Montgomery Housing Partnership.

As in prior years, MHP's top priority in this year's budget is additional funding to support acquisition, development, and renovation of affordable housing. The County Executive's recommended budget proposes flat funding for the Housing Initiative Fund, which provides rental assistance and gap financing for projects. When the capital and operating budgets are considered together, the HIF is approximately \$63 million strong; however, what gets lost in this number is that funding for acquisition and preservation comprises less than half of this total, or \$27 million in the coming year. Of that \$27 million, DHCA reports that about \$20 million is already committed and that the remaining \$7 million is expected to be allocated during the first quarter of FY20.

As a point of comparison, the District of Columbia has been investing \$100 million annually for the last several years in production alone. And just last month, the mayor announced that the city would be increasing its annual investment to \$130 million. Absent additional funding, DHCA anticipates that it will be short on its ability to fund projects in the pipeline for the first time in recent memory. In light of these circumstances, we are requesting the Council to place an additional \$8 million on its reconciliation list for production of affordable housing in either the operating or capital budget.

Switching gears, Montgomery Housing Partnership's next most important priority is early childhood education. We were pleased last month to see the county announce a new initiative to increase access to early childhood development for low-income families over the coming years. This has been an integral part of MHP's mission for many years and we believe we can help play a role in expanding access to pre-kindergarten education through our Play & Learn program for preschool age children, which is targeted at high-need areas of the county such as Wheaton and East County. Regrettably, the Play & Learn program was not recommended for funding as part of the County Executive's community grants, but we hope the Council will give strong consideration to the program as it directly aligns with the county's goal of ensuring that all of our children enter school ready to learn.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input on the FY20 budget.