



To Lead, Advocate and Connect as the Voice of Business

FY20 Operating Budget
Montgomery County Council
April 8, 2019

I am Gigi Godwin, President and CEO of the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. This is the first time I am testifying before this new Council and I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the FY20 Operating Budget.

I am here to speak about: driving toward a shared vision for a 21st century community; increased investment for Economic Development; sustainability of County spending; and, support for a NEW regulatory commission to identify obsolete practices and modernize compliance processes.

I am here representing our diverse members who are:

- Companies as small as a 2 person to companies that employ tens-of-thousands.
 - they are diverse in industry: government contractors, builders and contractors, information technology, hospitality, financial services, and so many more.
- they are “local to global” in a regionally competitive and globally connected economy.

Our members are doing incredible and exciting work. They are building block-chain technology and artificial intelligence, curing cancer, saving the planet, and creating new ideas for place-making and building where all of these things happen.

All of them are *employers* who contribute to the well-being of our residents and the economic vitality of our community.

This is why I am here today. Your Operating Budget must drive us toward a shared vision for a 21st century community that will attract the talent, and the employers, needed to solve global challenges.

So...what is keeping my members up at night? Talent Attraction and Retention.

What are the obstacles?

- Transportation - Congestion and not enough transit
- Housing - Access to housing that the next generation of professionals can afford
- And critical mass – we need to attract more employers in strategic industries like bio and information technology, cyber, financial services, construction, and high-tech manufacturing.

So, this year, this new Council has a unique opportunity to look, with fresh eyes, at the obstacles that impede attraction of employers and the talent they need for a 21st Century Montgomery County.

One clear obstacle is duplicative and obsolete regulations that take time, and frustrate our entrepreneurs and innovators. They are a deterrent to recruiting new or expanding an existing business here because, as Congressman Jamie Raskin says, it is “an unnecessary tax on time.” This contributes to the impression that it is hard to get things done here.

For that reason, the Chamber supports the County Executive’s recommendation to establish a regulatory review commission to identify, eliminate or streamline those obstacles. Further to that point, the Commission’s recommendations should then result in change and be included in future budgets and policies introduced and adopted by this Council.

On Economic vision: in today’s Post, President Navarro specifically mentioned the importance of increased investment in Economic Development. We agree and suggest that you increase the County’s investment in programs like: the MOVE program and the creation of the Regional Business Services Hub Program. And, consistent with your vision of our County’s economic future, we recommend that you implement an economic impact analysis of *all* proposed County legislation BEFORE it is adopted.

We’ve talked about talent attraction and retention. We must also grow our own talent. The Chamber applauds the renewed investment by MCPS in *career readiness*.

In closing, as a newly formed Council, you have a unique opportunity now to consider the shared vision that we are driving towards and that this operating budget must support.

The Chamber is vested in the success of our community and we stand ready to assist the County Executive and County Council in these efforts.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify today.