

Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

April 2, 2024

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Testimony to Montgomery County Council
Special Appropriation to the FY24 Operating Budget, JOBS Initiative
Position: Support

Good afternoon Council President Friedson and members of the County Council. Thank you for the opportunity to share the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber's support for the special appropriation to the FY24 Operating Budget for the Jobs, Opportunities, and Business Support Initiative, known as the JOBS Initiative. I am Paula Ross, President & CEO of the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce. For 75 years, the GGCC has been the leading advocate for businesses along the upper I270 corridor in Montgomery County, commonly called the "Upcounty." We specifically serve the business communities in Gaithersburg, Germantown, Clarksburg, and Damascus; our membership currently includes approximately 470 members in dozens of industries. Our members range in size from volunteer-run nonprofits with zero employees, to solopreneurs, to businesses with thousands of employees in the Upcounty.

The reality is that we often hear from business owners that it is tough to do business here in Montgomery County, that it's tough to grow here, and to grow roots here. That perspective is realized in the data; we have 25,000 fewer jobs than we had in Montgomery County just 4.5 years ago.

The JOBS Initiative is a statement to our employers, and our neighbors, that we want to strive for competitiveness, that we want to reestablish Montgomery County as an economic force in the region. This initiative will incentivize employers to create multiple high-paying jobs here in the County; it will set up an Innovation fund similar to those found at several regional neighbors including Fairfax, Arlington, and DC; and it will support investment in, and programming support for, entrepreneurs from underserved communities and from Montgomery County Equity Focus Areas. Several of those Equity Focus Area tracts are within the service area of the GGCC - in Gaithersburg, Germantown, and Montgomery Village. Our Chamber's goal will be to work as a partner with you to serve these growing businesses along the upper I270 corridor through this program and we stand ready to help.



Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce, Inc.



We urge the Council's support of the JOBS Initiative and the Special Appropriation to make it be realized.

Sincerely,

Paula Ross
President & CEO
Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce

For 75 years, the Gaithersburg-Germantown Chamber of Commerce has been the leading advocate for businesses along the upper I270 corridor in Montgomery County, commonly called the "Upcounty." We specifically serve the business communities in Gaithersburg, Germantown, Clarksburg, and Damascus; our membership currently includes approximately 470 members in dozens of industries. Our members range in size from volunteer-run nonprofits with zero employees, to solopreneurs, to businesses with thousands of employees in the Upcounty. We are committed to being a voice for all businesses in the Upcounty, resulting in a business-friendly environment and high quality of life in our community.