

**Remarks by Dr. Jermaine F. Williams
President of Montgomery College
East County Education Center Press Conference
November 2, 2022**

Welcome, everyone, to the home of Montgomery College’s East County Education Center—and more importantly, welcome to the start of our next phase in this exciting journey. It’s tempting to think of “opportunity” as something that exists in the ether, but the people here today know the truth. Discovering what a community needs and wants is fundamental to designing opportunity. The architects of such plans have to listen intently. They must also plan meticulously. Many of you gathered here today have been working behind the scenes for two years... measuring, evaluating, testing, and organizing. That level of commitment is what it takes to empower people to change their lives.

I want thank the tireless efforts of the County: County Executive Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Council President Gabe Albornoz, and Montgomery County Councilmembers Craig Rice, Nancy Navarro and Will Jawando. Their support of the College and their vision for Montgomery County has been transformational. The support of employers such as Dr. Anthony Stahl, the president of Adventist Health Care White Oak Medical Center, is essential as we build the work force of today and the future.

The community has long advocated for role for MC in East County to advance the quality of life here and local citizens, such as Peter Myo Khin chair of the East County citizens advisory board have been essential. The College has long valued our partnerships with Montgomery County Public Schools and Adventist Health—and the East County Center is an opportunity to deepen our work together. We are all committed to providing easy access to postsecondary education for local high school students and to enhancing the health care talent pipeline. So, we deeply appreciate the presence of Dr. Anthony Stahl, the president of Adventist Health Care White Oak Medical Center and –Dr. Afie Mirshah-Nayar the principal of Paint Branch High School, both of whom are here with us today. Of course, I am always grateful for Montgomery College students, one of whom is with us today, nursing student Nneka Ndubisi.

These individuals and their efforts, I believe, will enable the East County Education Center to create an anchor this region. A place where economic mobility is within everyone’s reach; and a fulcrum for growth and innovation—for a community. I’m going to turn it over to the College’s Board of Trustees, First Vice Chair Freida Lacey.

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Thank you. This is a very exciting day. I see partners from education, industry, government, and civic organizations. We all know the saying that “it takes a village,” and this is a terrific example of that. We are all here because we have a unique role in advancing even more opportunities in the eastern part of Montgomery County. When I say more opportunities, that’s because there are already many assets driving a vibrant East County: first it’s the community—the people— and community cornerstones like libraries and recreation centers. There are also growing businesses, robust transportation, and rich diversity, and other major partners.

Montgomery College has had a presence in the East County since 2015, when we established a community engagement center inside the East County Regional Service Center on Briggs Chaney Road. Since 2015 the College has served thousands of people seeking training and job skills. These individuals have been empowered to take advantage of classes and learning opportunities –many of them free, such as English classes and computer trainings—that have improved their earning potential. Now it's time to expand those opportunities and we can do so with the help of everyone here today.

As I mentioned at the start, the county's leadership and generous support –the County Executive, the County Council and our State Delegation, and community members—are what has brought this day to fruition. County Executive Marc Elrich's vision is what started us all on this journey with the initiation of the feasibility study. We are thrilled that he saw Montgomery College as the right partner for this expansion and an anchor institution that will help East County thrive. The entire County Council has been a consistent ally of the College, and a tireless champion of this expansion. They have supported our efforts at serving all constituents throughout the County –people of all incomes, races and national origins. This is a county that is deeply committed to equity. It is also closely attuned to the need for skilled workers to continue building the knowledge economy.

This is the nexus where we can all have a transformational impact: Local businesses rely on employees whose skills match their needs –in health care, information technology, hospitality services, and more. Our local neighbors are eager to step into these jobs, and they can with the right education and training.

That's where Montgomery College comes in: Our mission is to empower people to change their lives with access to education in fields like cybersecurity and information tech, health sciences, small business administration, and early childhood education, among others. These classes will begin in the fall of 2023, with access to public transportation and proximity to several local employers. There will be spaces for innovation, connection and progress, as well as student advising and other supports. The East County Education Center will be a portal for access and an anchor that enriches the life of the community.

Just two weeks ago, I introduced a College goal of mapping one hundred percent of Montgomery College's credit and noncredit offerings to a credential of economic, social, and community impact. By nurturing a pervasive college-going culture throughout Montgomery County, we can open doors to opportunity, increase achievement, and enhance the economic mobility of everyone. That means progress for our students. That's progress for our businesses, our public school system, and our neighborhoods. This is the type of progress that leads to transformation.

I'm so grateful to have dedicated and talented partners who are willing to make investments in our shared vision for a vibrant East County. I am confident that –together—we will have a transformational impact!