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Thursday, July 21, 2011

Montgomery County Council  
Sent by email

Dear Council President Ervin and Councilmembers:

The Executive Committee of the Montgomery County Civic Federation has unanimously voted to support Bill 19-11, "Personnel - Collective Bargaining - Public Access." Our decision will be communicated to our membership and voted on by all attending delegates at our September 12 meeting.

Our current process of collective bargaining between the County Executive and the public employee unions eliminates almost all public knowledge of and input into the collective bargaining process. The proposed legislation would recognize the rights and responsibilities of the public as an interested party in these proceedings by providing the public with greater, while still reasonable, access and input into negotiated labor agreements. The public is the recipient of the services provided by our public employees, and the source of the taxes that fund these services.

The bill would require the Council to hold a public hearing on each collective bargaining agreement submitted to it, change certain dates in the collective bargaining process, and require public disclosure of each party's initial bargaining position on major economic provisions. We believe this reform represents a modest increase in governmental openness, transparency and public accountability. It is not a measure that would "strip away" unions collective bargaining rights. We commend the Organizational Reform Commission for their work in recommending this measure. We congratulate the County Council for taking up this difficult and sure to be contentious issue, and we urge the Council to **support Bill 19-11**.

Sincerely,

Peggy Dennis, President  
Montgomery County Civic Federation