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Isiah Leggett
County Executive

**STATEMENT OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE ISIAH LEGGETT
AFFIRMING MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S APPROACH TO CREATING
SOCIAL COHESION & PUBLIC SAFETY**

January 16, 2018

"I am proud of the highly collaborative community based work that is being done in Montgomery County to create social cohesion and ensure public safety. In a world that is facing increased acts of hate and violence, we can be confident and grateful for the ways our government is working with the faith community and community organizations to strengthen our sense of solidarity and security.

"The work being done under my Faith Community Advisory Council illustrates how we are bringing the greater community together for better understanding one another and serving the common good. The Advisory Council's Faith Community Working Group (FCWG) has faith leaders ranging from Anglican to Zoroastrian on call 24/7 responding to acts of hate and violence.

"Rejecting the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) model, we have forged a partnership with our Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Police, Fire and Rescue Services, and the FCWG that has worked jointly to train and certify 40 faith leaders to serve with these departments and agencies as first responders to emergencies and to communities that are in distress because of violence, racism or intolerance. Our focus is bringing disparate groups together to reconcile differences, create community and enlighten them in a culturally sensitive manner. The efforts of the FCWG are highlighted below.

"In response to gun violence, the FCWG has sponsored interfaith and inter-agency vigils as well as town halls. Their Interracial and Interfaith Dialogues on Racism have drawn several hundred people. Currently their Intercultural Dialogues on Bias are engaging teachers, parents, Police, Fire and Rescue officers and others interested in facing their own bias and becoming a better colleague, neighbor and friend.

"The FCWG's Education Committee works with Superintendent Smith and his management team increasing cultural competency, reducing bullying and celebrating diversity. Examples include publishing Guidelines for Respecting Religious Diversity printed in nine languages, hosting an annotated interfaith calendar featuring all religious holidays, holding Parent Academies in houses of worship for immigrant families and co-sponsoring a United We Learn arts context requiring students from diverse backgrounds to work together.

"In response to the anti-Muslim rhetoric in political debate, I asked the Faith Community Liaison, Rev. Mansfield Kaseman, to organize a Summit of Muslim Leaders with members of the County Council, Police Chief, States Attorney, Director of DHHS and representation from Montgomery County Schools. We listened to concerns and three initiatives resulted strengthening ties with the

Police, strengthening ties with Public Schools and strengthening DHHS services for anxious Muslim residents.

“At a subsequent Summit on July 7, 2016, I signed a Proclamation with then Council President Nancy Floreen, commending the Muslim community for their wonderful contributions to our county, commending our Public Schools and encouraging further collaboration for improving communication and providing a safe environment for Muslim students, affirming the role of Muslim leaders in interfaith programs that are creating a more just and compassionate county, and stating we will not tolerate hatred toward Muslims and will work together to replace fear and prejudice with encouragement, hope and support.

“Thanks to these and other measures for creating social cohesion, building resilience and ensuring public safety, we have been identified by the U.S. State Department as a prime example from which others may learn. I am proud that we are hosting on a regular basis delegations from all corners of the world consisting of elected officials, professors, social workers, school administrators and teachers, faith leaders and security related professionals.

“At a time when too many relationships of trust between our residents and our public safety officers are broken, we are building relationships. As some appeal to others fears and prejudices, we are appealing to the dignity of every individual.

“The key to our success, that is drawing praise across the world, can be found in the dignity and integrity of our governmental leaders working collaboratively with our community for the security and wellbeing of every resident in Montgomery County. We welcome people from every religious, ethnic and racial background. We treat every resident with dignity and respect.

“People of good will can disagree about politics. What should unite us all, however, is getting at the roots of hate, violence, and terrorism. That is why what we are doing in Montgomery Country is so critical.

“I support what we are doing 100 percent. Let us keep up this good work as we continue to work toward Dr. King’s beloved community.”

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