



County of Fairfax, Virginia

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County

Fairfax County Human Services Council

Educating ♦ Supporting ♦ Engaging
the Fairfax Community

March 28, 2015

Human Services
Council

TO: Chairman and Members of Board of Supervisors

At-Large

Kevin H. Bell, *Chair*
Myra Herbert

FROM: Kevin H. Bell, Chairman
Fairfax County Human Services Council

Braddock District

Dr. Jennifer Anne
Bishop-Crawford
Jeff Dannick

SUBJECT: Recommendations on the FY 2016 Advertised Budget Plan

Dranesville District

Steven Bloom
Kathleen Murphy

The Human Services Council appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the FY 2016 Advertised Budget Plan. In meetings with community residents, nonprofit providers, and members of the Boards, Authorities and Commissions, Council members heard several consistent themes:

Hunter Mill District

Dr. Jerry Poje *Vice-chair*
Rev. LaVerne
McCain Gill

The Human Services System provides substantial return on investment.

Lee District

Robert L. Faherty

The effect of human service prevention and early intervention programs expand geometrically, saving money and resources across related county public safety, justice, and public education systems. The proverbial ounce of prevention should inform our budgetary actions.

Mason District

Mark Deal
Stephanie Mensh

Health and human services programming is essential to the overall vitality of the Fairfax County economy.

Mt. Vernon District

Col. Marion
Barnwell
Jack Dobbyn

Recommended Program Restorations and Rationale

Providence District

Henry Wulf
Adrienne Stokes

With these themes in mind, the Council strongly recommends restoration of two programs eliminated in the FY 2016 Advertised Budget Plan:

1. **Healthy Families Fairfax Program (\$1,871,715)**

Springfield District

Robert E. Gaudian
William Kogler

The community collectively expressed overwhelming alarm over the proposed elimination of the Healthy Families Fairfax program. The Council rejects this elimination as wholly inconsistent with the priorities of the Board of Supervisors, particularly as expressed in the recently adopted economic strategic plan. The plan emphasizes that access to early childhood education is a key element to maintaining our world class schools.

Sully District

Carol A. Hawn
Rev. Dr. Jerrold
Foltz

This highly effective program is primarily provided by three well regarded local nonprofits – United Community Ministries, Northern Virginia Family Service, and Cornerstones– in partnership with two county departments, Health and Family Services. In addition to the reduction of multiple county positions resulting from the proposed cut, 26 staff currently employed at these nonprofits would lose their jobs if the county funding is not restored.

Operating in the county since 1991, this program serves families screened as having high risk factors for child abuse and neglect. This nationally recognized program is highly respected, with proven outcomes, operating in hundreds of communities nation-wide. In our community, it is one of the only discretionary, non-mandated health and child abuse prevention services available. In 2014, Fairfax County spent an average of \$78,658 per child for foster care placements. In contrast, it costs \$3,473 per family to provide prevention services through the Healthy Families Fairfax program, which aims to keep children out of foster care.

Despite its well documented effectiveness, unfortunately demand far exceeds capacity. As a result, only 20 percent of the mothers identified in need of these services are served. Absent fiscal constraints, this program would be a leading candidate for increased investment as it results in significant cost avoidance to law enforcement, the courts, hospitals and social services.

Additional data on the effectiveness of this program are attached for reference.

2. Contract legal services for persons with disabilities (\$51,017)

The county has funded legal assistance to low-income persons with disabilities unable to work to obtain Social Security and Social Security Disability benefits since the mid-1980s. The math is simple: the county spends \$51,000 on this program. This is offset by average annual recovery of nearly \$23,000 in General Relief payments and annual payments to county residents of \$108,000 on average over the past three years, which has a positive economic multiplier effect in the community. The proposed program elimination is simply nonsensical when considering the overall benefit and diversion of greater costs to the community, a theme we will return to in discussions with the Board.

Areas of Support for the County Executive's Advertised Budget Plan

At the Council's February 26, 2015, meeting, County Executive Ed Long noted several fiscal constraints facing the county, including the increasing service demands across county services, and residential and commercial revenue forecasts that constrain ability to meet all demands for both county services and public schools. The Council expresses its support for the County Executive's investments in core services, particularly in the following areas:

- **Staffing request and funding to address increased Public Assistance caseloads (\$2.46 million and 20 FTE)**
- **Support for additional staffing to address domestic violence and court services needs (\$1.0 million)**
- **Additional funding for 70 FCPS special education graduates for adult day programs provided in the community (\$1.28 million)**

Further, the Council supports the School Age Child Care (SACC) fee scale and fees proposed to generate additional revenue and correct the current inequities in the fee structure (\$0.8 million). The proposed changes to the SACC fee scale are a long overdue first step, and the Council supports review next year to determine whether further adjustments are appropriate. We also support the agreement with the District of Columbia that will generate additional revenue for the Juvenile Detention Center (\$0.9 million).

Service Trends and Budget Drivers

The County General Fund and the human services system have come under increasing pressure as service demands have outpaced the county's financial resources. Unfortunately, the human services system is now confronting the "new normal," balancing very constrained resources against increasing needs resulting from the Great Recession which have not fully abated, the increasing suburbanization of poverty, and demographic changes.

Last year, the Council noted that funding levels further limited flexibility to meet service demands. The proposed FY 2016 reductions are of grave concern because they cut into core services and will have damaging consequences. Beyond the two programs proposed for elimination that the Council recommends for restoration, the Council and the community are also deeply concerned about the following proposed reductions and eliminations in the Advertised Budget:

- Elimination of \$275,000 in local funds for a program established by the Board in the 1980s to provide modest tax relief to low income, disabled seniors who rent their housing.
- Failure to include funding for needed services for 85,000 Fairfax County veterans through the newly created Veteran Treatment Docket in the General District Court.
- Elimination of over \$1.8 million in local funds to the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board that could have been reinvested to support known service gaps. Examples include: mental health treatment to incarcerated youth and adults, community-based outpatient treatment for low income and uninsured youth, adults in homeless services and substance use treatment services.
- Reductions in locally run and faith-based volunteer provided parenting education (\$0.3 million).
- "Unspecified" personnel reductions totaling over \$1.4 million, which the Council anticipates will further erode response to residents in need of services.

These program reductions and eliminations, along with others, will have a significant adverse impact on the health of our community. The Council deeply regrets these proposed funding reductions and recognizes that many competing county priorities and finite resources gave the County Executive little choice in proposing painful reductions in county "non-mandated" services. The result, however, will be a widening gap in responding to human service problems and inability to serve all eligible populations for many services. The Board must consider what our community will become if we fail to address significant service gaps driven by:

- demographic growth and changes
- increasing numbers of persons in poverty
- shifts in state funding that result in the county being forced to pick up greater shares of costs in state managed, locally administered social and public assistance services, treatment, health and early intervention services.

Given the dire fiscal environment, the Council again recommends Board consideration to defer funding for the Inova Translational Medicine Institute for another fiscal year, and that the proposed funding (\$500,000) be used to restore some of the proposed reductions in human services.

In conclusion, resources to the human services system provide a substantial return on investment. Health and human services programs save money in public safety, the courts and the schools. The programs provided are essential to the overall health of our economy and to the lives of county residents. We intend to serve as one of the many community partners eager to assist in this community dialogue.

cc: Human Services Council Members
Edward L. Long Jr., County Executive
Patricia D. Harrison, Deputy County Executive
Susan W. Datta, Chief Financial Officer, Department of Management and Budget
Human Services Department Directors

As part of the Council's charter, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors charged the Council with two tasks: provide feedback on resources provided for the human services system, and engage the community on key trends, community needs and strategies to respond to community priorities and service needs.