



County of Fairfax, Virginia

Fairfax County Human Services Council

Educating ♦ Supporting ♦ Engaging
the Fairfax Community

Human Services
Council

At-Large

Kevin H. Bell
Martin Machowsky

Braddock District

Maria Posey
Dr. Patrice Winter

Dranesville District

Steven Bloom

Franconia District

Robert L. Faherty
Michele Menapace,
Chair

Hunter Mill District

Dr. Jerry Poje
Paul Thomas

Mason District

Christopher Falcon
Alis Wang, Vice-
Chair

Mt. Vernon District

Adwoa Rey

Providence District

Thomas Goodwin

Springfield District

William Kogler
Steven Lam

Sully District

Rev. Dr. Jerrold L.
Foltz

DATE: March 24, 2023
TO: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
FROM: Michele Menapace, Chair, Human Services Council
Paul Thomas, Chair, Human Services Budget Committee
SUBJECT: FY 2024 Advertised Budget Plan Recommendations

The Human Services Council (HSC), which since its founding in 1988 has advised the Board of Supervisors on Health and Human Services (HHS) issues throughout the County, offers the following recommendations on the FY 2024 Advertised Budget Plan. The Board of Supervisors' continual support of these important priority items is a powerful demonstration of its ongoing commitment to achieving economic and social equity for all residents.

The County's decision to leverage both its federal pandemic relief funding and its quarterly review process (third quarter and carryover) for basic needs assistance has ensured that individuals and families have food, housing, and health care over the past three years. This has been crucial to the well-being of thousands of residents. Although the labor market has been robust, rising housing costs and inflation have created new challenges for many residents, especially residents experiencing economic vulnerability. Accordingly, we urge the Board to continue utilizing all available funding sources to address basic needs, including the recommendation contained in the *FY 2023 Third Quarter Review* to maintain available reserve funding to provide potential investments for food access, emergency rental assistance, and homeless services.

The County Executive's proposed budget for HHS initiatives includes several essential investments that will further the Board's long-established HHS goals, and also advance the Board's commitment to social and economic equity:

- **Behavioral Health:** \$340,000 for a youth behavioral health services navigation program will help residents find the services they need.
- **Employee Compensation:** Increasing employee compensation is critical to recruiting and retaining skilled and experienced staff.
- **HHS Contract Rate Increases:** The \$8.4 million rate increase for HHS contracts recognizes the integral role that our community partners play in serving community residents.
- **HHS Innovation Fund:** The HSC is appreciative of the ongoing support of this fund, which will be used for economic mobility initiatives that will launch later this year.

While there is consideration for reducing the real estate tax rate, the Human Services Council strongly urges the Board not to cut HHS programs to find offsetting spending reductions. Strategic investments in HHS are inextricably linked to a robust economy and a safe and healthy community that is resilient and provides equitable opportunities for all residents. It is clearer than ever how integral HHS are to the success, well-being, and vitality of our community and those investments must continue to be prioritized.

The Human Services Council reviewed the [FY 2024 HHS Strategic Allocation of Resources Plan](#) and engaged with the other HHS boards, authorities, and commissions (BACs) about budget priorities, which are reflected in the following funding items supported by the Council. These funding items are listed alphabetically and are not ranked or prioritized.

Affordable Housing: To reach the Board's ambitious goals regarding the production of new affordable housing and the preservation of our existing stock, we must continue to work toward the full recommended funding of two cents on the tax rate within the baseline budget. Accordingly, should additional funding be available in FY 2024, the Council urges the Board to continue investment in this area to sustain progress toward the ultimate goal.

Early Childhood: Evidence demonstrates that experiences from birth through age 5 are critical to children's development. However, many children in Fairfax lack access to integrated, inclusive early learning experiences before kindergarten. The Council is aware that this is a current strategic initiative of the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team, and is also aware of the Superintendent's proposed budget including funding for increased early childhood opportunities. Accordingly, we ask that the County's Early Childhood Development and Learning Program be expanded to an additional 108 children at an estimated cost of \$2 million.

Emergency Rental Assistance Program: HSC encourages the Board to allocate \$3 million, or identify available federal stimulus funds, to the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. Forty-seven percent of Fairfax County renters are rent-burdened, paying at least 30 percent of their income for housing. With inflation putting additional strain on household budgets, residents may be at greater risk of falling behind on their rent, so it is important that rental assistance continue to be available to mitigate evictions and ultimately prevent additional homelessness in our community.

Food Insecurity: The HSC is concerned about increased food insecurity in our community, especially with the recent end of the emergency allotments to SNAP benefits, which will impact our most economically vulnerable residents. We request that additional funding, either through the General Fund or federal stimulus dollars, be available to support the County's food provider network to ensure that they can meet increased demands.

Opportunity Neighborhoods Expansion: The Council asks that the Board provide \$412,642 to expand the highly successful Opportunity Neighborhoods initiative to Centreville. Opportunity Neighborhoods is a proven model that ensures the schools, government, and community collectively coordinate the support and resources necessary for youth and their families to thrive. With the current youth behavioral health crisis and achievement gap, investments in collective impact initiatives like these are more critical than ever.

Human Services Council
FY 2024 Advertised Budget Plan Recommendations

In conclusion, Fairfax County's decades-long commitment to advance health, well-being, and quality of life for all residents is possible only through the determination of such leaders like the Board of Supervisors, County Executive Bryan Hill, Deputy County Executive Chris Leonard, Chief Financial Officer Christina Jackson, and Chief Equity Officer Karla Bruce. On behalf of the tens of thousands of individuals and families who seek only to live their lives to the fullest potential, we thank you all.

We look forward to sharing our presentation and having a discussion with you about our budget priorities on March 28.