



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

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

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July 21, 2021

Dear Director Becketts and DFS Staff:

Thank you so much for the opportunity to review and offer thoughts on the 2022 Fairfax County Human Services Issue Paper. Below you will find four sections with recommendations on additional language for the report that we believe will help further Fairfax County's policy goals when requesting legislation, funding, and regulatory support from the Commonwealth related to family services.

## **Foster Care**

For foster care service in Fairfax County, we recommend the issue paper request:

- Continued support for the Children's Ombudsman office within the Virginia's Department of Social Services. Long-term funding and support for this office will help identify potential cases of mistreatment and improve outcomes for foster families here in Fairfax County.
- More support for state, local, and volunteer-generated outreach to potential foster families, including more visible recruitment efforts and more programming to build awareness around the need for more foster families, particularly those willing to care for children under two and those in high school.
- Where possible, increased financial support and certification help for foster families, specifically for those willing to care for very young children, teenagers, and those willing to help keep families together.

## **Tenant Legal Assistance**

- As the draft issue paper notes, the Commonwealth should "Expand resources available to ensure legal assistance and aid to tenants facing eviction." We would further note that while resources are critical, they often may not always reach potential beneficiaries due to a lack of proactive notification. We recommend language that advocates for a robust prevention program.

## **Caregiving**

- We note that the Older Adults and People with Disabilities section does not have a specific recommendation outside of reaffirming the previous position. We recommend adding language to indicate that the County supports funding for programs that promote



the independence, self-sufficiency, and community engagement of older adults and people with disabilities.

- We recommend language noting the need for increased wages for home health aides. Low wages are one of the most important drivers of high turnover, disrupting successful relationships built between aides and clients.
- We recommend language that focuses on the needs that arise that young people with disabilities oftentimes make from transitioning from school programs to day services. Specifically, we recommend language noting that parents need safe and reliable transportation, the need for these young adults to be able to maintain a variety of social interactions, and the need for day programs to have extended hours for working parents.

### **General Notes**

- The draft we were provided had statistics and an outlook generally in line with FY 2021. For example, it noted that we were operating in a time of reduced revenues, which may not be the case for FY 2022. We know staff will update these aspects of the report, but we did want to bring it to staff attention just to be extra sure!

Again, thank you so much for the opportunity to provide comments on this very important policy document. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

David T.S. Jonas, Chair  
On behalf of the Fairfax County Advisory Social Services Board

Cc: Each member of the Fairfax County Advisory Social Services Board

