

Dear Chairman McKay and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

The Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB) presents this annual report on the services provided by the Department of Family Services (DFS) as a summary of the department's accomplishments over the past year, as well as a record of the outcomes DFS has achieved. The ASSB is required under the Code of Virginia to issue an annual report on the department's activities, and as this report shows, the need for DFS services remains high throughout Fairfax County.

The ASSB is especially appreciative of DFS's accomplishments in a year marked by the county's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Services were expanded to Adult and Aging clients to help deliver medication and groceries, nutrition programs were updated to extend renewals and increase benefits, and other DFS services were updated to be delivered electronically or otherwise keep social distancing in mind. In this difficult year, DFS estimates that one in every five households in the county has been helped in some way by its services—either through direct use of programs, calling emergency hotlines, attending community outreach events, or volunteering.

The ASSB—this year especially—commends DFS staff, volunteers, and other community members who ensured that the increased demand for services in several areas was continuously met at a high level, often in creative and original ways.

The success we have seen in Fairfax County over recent years is built upon a framework that provides all residents with the opportunity to live their best lives. The services offered by DFS through the divisions of Self-Sufficiency, Children Youth and Families, Adult and Aging, and Domestic and Sexual Violence Services continue to help people in crisis and prevent future crises from occurring. We must continue to provide equitable opportunities as far upstream as possible—not just at the very end.

Investing in our community and all its members through these prevention programs avoids the need for more serious and expensive actions and leads to a more just society. We know with critical early intervention services, children are more likely to be successful in school and require fewer services; teens are more likely to be engaged in work or educational pursuits and less likely to be incarcerated; adults are more likely to own homes and businesses, and older adults are more likely to remain active and independent. This is the foundation of a strong and vibrant community.

**We strongly believe that successful prevention programs in DFS and throughout the Health, Housing, and Human Services system must remain funded and be allowed to expand to meet demand throughout Fairfax County.** Equally important, the county needs to invest in measuring outcomes and to continuously learn what impacts these services are having on our residents. DFS and other departments must be diligent in collecting this kind of data and then using it constructively to make our system more accessible, equitable, and successful.

As we build upon these accomplishments, we look forward to working collaboratively with the county to implement its new strategic plan and to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic stronger and more vibrant than ever.

Sincerely,

David T.S. Jonas, Chair  
Advisory Social Services Board