



County of Fairfax, Virginia

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

April 12, 2023

Chairman Jeff McKay
Board of Supervisors
County of Fairfax
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, Virginia 22035

Dear Chairman McKay:

The Advisory Social Services Board (ASSB) advises the Director of the Department of Family Service (DFS) to support the department in providing vital programs and services that help support vulnerable Fairfax County residents. DFS accomplishes this work by addressing safety and protection, furthering economic self-sufficiency, supporting family resilience, and improving the quality of life for residents.

The ASSB is very pleased with what DFS has been able to accomplish in another year marked by the lingering hardships caused by the pandemic and thanks the Board of Supervisors for their ongoing support of critical human services and those provided by DFS in particular. We understand that there was very little room in the FY 2024 proposed budget for new or expanded initiatives, and the majority of new funding was allocated to preserve the county's "core." More specifically, the ASSB appreciates the addition of \$8.4 million to provide contract rate adjustments in FY 2024 as our community human service partners struggle with inflationary and employee retention pressures and the \$0.4 million added to DFS' baseline budget to support higher Auxiliary Grant income supplements for Social Security Insurance recipients and those with disabilities.

The ASSB's top concerns for FY 2024 center on continuing to support the County's long-term strategies and DFS' core work. Affordable housing, for example, is a significant and critical short- and long-term challenge for the county given that 44 percent of renters pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Our human service agencies witness the adverse impacts that housing insecurity has on the lives of our community's most vulnerable residents every day. Affordable housing is essential to individual and family well-being. It provides stability and security; enables household budgets to accommodate other basic needs like food, transportation, and medical care; and is essential to our youngest residents feeling safe and secure so they can focus on learning and being kids.

The Board's recently adopted goal of creating a minimum of 10,000 affordable units by 2034 and near doubling of the baseline funding allocated to affordable housing development are steps in the right direction, along with the investments proposed in the *FY 2023 Third Quarter Review* for affordable housing and homelessness services. However, given the significant investments

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FAIRFAX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILY SERVICES

needed to make progress, action must be taken in every budget, even in times of constrained resources. Hence, the ASSB supports and urges the Board to consider additional FY 2024 funding for emergency rental assistance to expand support beyond pre-pandemic levels and, if possible, to further support the 10,000 affordable unit goal.

As we look forward, additional significant investments will be needed along with alignment of resources, innovative land use and zoning policies, and the ongoing collaboration across county agencies, boards, authorities, and commissions is vital to effectively meeting the challenges ahead.

Finally, we ask the Board to continue pursuing the racial and social equity goals advanced by the Chairman's Task Force on Equity and Opportunity. The ASSB takes seriously the recommendations advanced by the Task Force, and we believe many of these recommendations meet the notion embedded within One Fairfax, that "We all do better when we ALL do better." We remain committed to a Fairfax County that provides all residents with the opportunity to live their best lives.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide comments on the budget during this time.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

Laura Martinez

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Laura Martinez, Chair
Fairfax County Advisory Social Services Board

Cc: Michael A Becketts, PhD, Director
Department of Family Services

