

Summary of Public Comments

**November 13, 2018
Fairfax County Government Center
Conference Room 9/10**

- 1. Kevin, Client Advocate, Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) and Brightpaths, Fairfax, VA (Presented and submitted written testimony)**
 - Demographics focus is homeless persons, disabled persons, and low-income individuals.
 - Geographic area of focus is Fairfax County.
 - Through personal story, issues identified include financial empowerment of vulnerable populations through personalized long-term financial education and counselling.
 - **Needs are: funding to assist vulnerable residents that need specialized and long-term education and counseling to achieve financial empowerment.**
- 2. Michael Mahrer, Literacy Council of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA (Presented and submitted written testimony)**
 - Demographic focus is residents who understand little to no English.
 - Supports the continuation of Literacy/Educational Development/Attainment as one of CCFAC's priorities.
 - Issues identified include the strong connection between English proficiency and poverty; the impact of an adult's lack of language and literacy skills on his or her family; and the economic imperative of greater social and racial inclusion when adult learners become more equitably engaged in the community.
 - **Needs are: increase affordable language and literacy learning opportunities available to extremely limited-English speaking adults.**
- 3. Robert Reed, Herndon-Reston Friendly Instant Sympathetic Help (FISH), Inc., Herndon, VA (Presented and submitted written testimony)**
 - Demographic focus is neighborhood residents experiencing a crisis and in-need of emergency financial assistance.
 - Geographic area of focus is Fairfax County.
 - Issues identified are the lack of emergency assistance providers serving Region 3 and the need for improvements in the current CCFAC process for making awards by eliminating the scoring emphasis on "outcomes," since a client that does not return for assistance is likely successfully served by another program (or was successfully served by the emergency assistance). Outcome should be judged by the beneficiary's feelings of despair to hope.
 - **Needs are: increase emergency assistance providers in Region 3 in Fairfax County.**

4. Mary Lee DiSpirito, Annandale Christian Community for Action (ACCA) (Presented and submitted written testimony)

- Demographic focus on the most vulnerable, including the homeless, elderly, and disabled/sick.
- Issues identified include the importance of using the Housing First model that is followed by wrap around services (i.e., furniture program, food banks) to prevent and end homelessness, and; the “fear factor” problem where some neighbors in-need are declining assistance for their very basic needs due to fear of their information getting out.
- **Needs are: support wrap around services and emergency assistance to the community (including those in need, but are difficult to reach), from those who may require a small amount of support to those that need long-term assistance.**

5. Multiple Representatives, Community Preservation and Development Corporation, Silver Spring, MD (All presented and submitted written testimony)

a. Stephanie Agyemang-Manu (Client)

- Personal story of how the after-school program in her affordable housing community became a second home to her, helped her complete her homework, and taught her life skills, such as time management and organization.

b. Carmela Dangale (Client)

- Personal story of how staff from the after-school program in her affordable housing community searched her out to provide guidance on how to focus on schoolwork and improve her grades, leading her to become an honor roll student.

c. Racheal Appiah (Client)

- Personal story of how the after-school program in her affordable housing community helped her grow as an individual and to become a leader in her volunteer program, and led her to help run a community student program.

d. Josue Salmeron (Managing Director of Community Impact Strategies)

- Demographic focus is on vulnerable children from elementary school through high school.
- Geographic area of focus is Fairfax County, particularly in Alexandria and Reston.
- Issues identified include the importance of connecting the children of affordable housing to critical resources where they live; using strategic resident engagement to support children’s school work; and developing job skills, employment stability, financial literacy, and healthy eating and exercise habits.
- **Needs are: support after-school programs within affordable housing communities that counsel and teach life skills to resident children of all ages.**

6. Dipti Pidikiti-Smith, Deputy Director of Advocacy, Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV), Fairfax, VA (Presented and submitted written testimony)

- Demographic focus is elderly, disabled, low-income individuals and survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, veterans, and individuals re-entering community after incarceration families.

- Geographic area of focus is Northern Virginia, particularly Fairfax County.
- Last June unemployment in Fairfax County dropped to 2.7%, but residents also saw a full 1% increase in those living in poverty, now 6.9%.
- From January through September 2018, there were 28,732 civil cases filed in the Fairfax County General District Court, of which 6,020 were eviction cases.
- Over 15% of County residents over the age of 5 do not speak English proficiently.
- One legal aid lawyer per 7,236 poor people in Virginia vs. one lawyer per 349 Virginians.
- Issues identified include the “Justice Gap” where the poor have little access to legal counsel to help address: housing issues, such as evictions; issues impacting financial stability, such as predatory lending traps and payday loans; and children’s education, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Legal aid is an essential supportive service and Fairfax County and local statistics show that local needs are severely unmet.
- **Needs are: increase civil legal services to meet the needs of low-income residents, including a large population of students in-need, to help navigate the court system and understand and protect their rights.**

7. Jerry Poje, Member, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (Presented and submitted written testimony)

- Citizen testimony as a member of Unitarian Universalist Congregation, but also informed by broad experiences in the human services field via work in county boards/councils/committees and collaborating with non-profit organizations.
- Estimated 40% of County human services (including housing) are being met by the non-profit sector.
- Based on past experience, the most successful community meetings supporting a new strategic plan occurred when local residents were brought to the table to share their perspectives.
- Issues identified include adopting more effective county policies, programs and public funding to ensure all residents are spending no more than 30% of income on housing.
- **Needs are: 1) participate within, improve, and advocate for the new strategic plan for housing, 2) increase direct engagement of people with dire housing needs, 3) elevate and nurture the roles for the non-profit community in housing with the wrap-around services needed to reach those in need, 4) expand efforts to intersect with other important County opportunities, 5) promote a more consistent community-organization perspective to engage 1.2 million Fairfax neighbors, and 6) influence other levels of government to become part of a more collaborative and creative solution.**

8. Jorge E. Figueredo, Executive Director, Edu-Futuro, Fairfax and Arlington, VA and Fairfax County Resident (Presented and submitted written testimony)

- Demographic focus is immigrant youth and their parents.
- Geographic areas of focus include Arlington and Fairfax Counties.
- Virginia Department of Education statistics show FCPS’ Class of 2018 had 1,031 student drop outs, of which 838 were Hispanic and 846 were Limited English Proficient students.
- Issues identified include the importance of empowering under-resourced immigrant families through education, counseling, and case management to help families break out

of the cycle of poverty, and the important role of nonprofits. Without other nonprofit services, Edu-Futuro would not be here today. No one service that is better than others.

- **Needs are: targeting the whole family to break the cycle of poverty; support nonprofits providing housing and food assistance – the immediate issues, but also work closely with their children, from grade school to high school; and support employer partners to ensure success for those that are not super achievers.**

9. Ann-Lise Quinn, Ph.D., Director, Impact Strategy and Quality Assurance, Cornerstones, Reston, VA (Presented only, no written testimony)

- Comments focused on how providing Housing First to individuals and families and then moving on is often not enough. Human services programs provide stability to the community, allowing the affordable housing industry to think more creatively.
- **Needs are: provide long-term case management for individuals and families, instead of just multiple interventions, that include consistent guidance on mental and physical health issues.**

10. Cindy Han, Family Counseling Center of Greater Washington, Vienna, VA (Presented only, no written testimony)

- Demographic focus is multicultural individuals and families, particularly youths, teenagers, and seniors.
- Geographic focus in Fairfax County.
- Issues identified include empowering multicultural individuals and families; combating mental health issues such as teen suicide, addiction, and isolation by creating awareness and a positive community environment; and assisting isolated seniors who often experience depression due to language barriers, lack of transportation access and/or are neglected by their families.
- **Needs are: provide for family empowerment through mental health education/counseling and peer-to-peer mentorships; partnerships between County schools and family counseling organizations, and additional support to isolated seniors.**

11. Ken McMillon, Member, Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board (CAAB) (Presented only, no written testimony)

- Comments focused on how human services may provide a “band-aid,” but it is the question of affordable housing that is most important issue to residents, especially for seniors.
- **Needs are: look beyond federal, state/local subsidy programs and discuss how to make housing affordable to community residents in a metropolitan area where housing is increasingly unaffordable.**

12. Lucy Beadnell, Director of Advocacy, The Arc of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA (Submitted written testimony only)

- Demographic focus is persons with developmental disabilities (DD).
- Geographic focus is the Northern Virginia area.

- A large portion of the DD community relies on Social Security income, just \$771 per month in 2019.
- The funding stream for support services in home is usually a Medicaid Waiver, which currently has a waiting list of more than 13,000 people statewide and more than 2,300 in Fairfax County alone.
- Issues identified include barriers to housing for people with DD, particularly when this population often faces housing discrimination that is less overt and difficult to prove. The DD population often have low incomes and work opportunities, with little to no credit history, and may need assistance in navigating the units that might accept government subsidies and the landlords that may provide reasonable accommodations.
- **Needs are: affordable housing for people with disabilities, especially units that are fully accessible to DD individuals and are close to major transit, and increasing supportive services in the homes of DD individuals that range from intermittent to 24/7 support.**

**13. Sean M. McGinnis, Executive Director, Hartwood Foundation, Inc., Fairfax, VA
(Submitted written testimony only)**

- Demographic focus is persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD).
- Geographic focus is Fairfax County.
- An overwhelming majority of Hartwood program participants have been supported by Hartwood for 20 years or more.
- Issues identified include the growing number of ID/DD individuals supported by respite and residential programs that are of retirement age, and either elect to, or are unable to, consistently attend a day program or supported employment, or wish to retire altogether.
- **Needs are: additional support (including, but not limited to, funding) for ID/DD providers that would allow for the development of “barrier-free” retirement options for the growing population of retirement-aged ID/DD individuals.**