



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

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

## Fairfax County Human Services Council

Educating ♦ Supporting ♦ Engaging  
the Fairfax Community

Human Services  
Council

**DATE:** March 30, 2021

**TO:** Chairman and Members, Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Patrice Winter, Human Services Council Chairperson *PW*  
Alis Wang, Human Services Council Budget Chairperson *AW*  
Marty Machowsky, Human Services Council Budget Chairperson *MM*

**SUBJECT:** FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan Recommendations

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The Human Services Council believes that in an unprecedented time of crisis, human services budget priorities should be focused on helping those who have faced the most challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic both in terms of health and economic setbacks. The Council supports the Advertised Budget's investments in Health, Housing and Human Services priorities such as pandemic response efforts, Diversion First, and Opioid Use Prevention efforts, among others. The Council also supports the advertised budget proposal, which includes an Economic Recovery Reserve of \$20 million for Fairfax County or school priorities as well as the additional programs and services outlined below.

In addition, the Council supports the county's vaccine equity strategy to identify individuals and communities in need through epidemiological data and the COVID-19 vulnerability index to facilitate access to vaccines and encourages the county to explore other opportunities to deliver vaccines equitably to all county residents. The Council suggests that to administer more vaccines to underserved populations, the county must address their trust, literacy (in any language), childcare, and transportation needs. To that end, the Council suggests finding ways to hold mass vaccination events in communities that have many underserved residents. If our underserved populations find it difficult to find, sign up for, and attend the county's well-run vaccination events, then the county must bring events to them.

### **Affordable Housing**

The Human Services Council supports the county's Community-wide Housing Strategic Plan efforts and the goal to produce at least 5,000 new affordable housing units over the next 15 years. The Council supports the County Executive's recommendation for additional personnel (2.0/2.0 FTE) support for the Department of Housing and Community Development. The Council appreciates the County Executive's recommendation to continue support for the Affordable Housing Development and Investment Fund but notes that one casualty of the COVID-19 crisis is the County Executive's recommendation in the FY21 budget to allocate one penny on the tax rate to affordable housing. The Council asks the Board of Supervisors to prioritize this initiative if additional funds become available in FY22 and in budget guidance for FY23.

### **Diversion First**

The Council supports the Board of Supervisors' priority to offer alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorders, or developmental disabilities who come into contact with the criminal justice system, through the countywide Diversion First initiative. Calls for service with police response involving mental illness increased by 22% from 2019 to 2020, and the number of people diverted from potential arrest increased by 13%. The number of people with behavioral health issues on pre-trial supervision increased by 4% and the specialty dockets have continued to grow.

### **Opioid Task Force**

The opioid epidemic continues to profoundly impact Fairfax County amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic. In the Fairfax Health District, from January through September 2020, there were 101 fatal drug overdoses and of those, 78 involved opioids. In addition, there were 271 emergency department visits or opioid overdoses in 2020. The Council supports the county's investment of \$1.43 million in the Opioid Task Force, which aims to reduce deaths from opioid use through prevention, treatment, and harm reduction.

### **Early Childhood Education**

The Human Services Council supports the Board of Supervisors' goal of ensuring that every child in Fairfax County has equitable opportunities to thrive and believes that expanding the county's Equitable Early Childhood System, including increasing access and affordability, is an essential strategy for doing so. While there are not additional General Fund resources for early childhood included in the proposed budget, we are pleased to see and support the inclusion of bond referenda for Early Childhood Facilities in the county's Capital Improvement Program Bond Referendum Plan (includes bond referenda of \$25 million in FY 2022, 2024, 2026 and 2028 for a total of \$100 million in funding for capital construction of early childhood facilities). The development of new facilities is a key strategy for increasing the availability of quality, affordable early childhood education services.

In addition, the establishment of the dedicated Early Childhood Birth to 5 Fund in FY21 enables the county to make investments in the systematic expansion of early childhood services as soon as funding becomes available. It is critical to move forward with the work of the Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan and recommendations of the School Readiness Resources Panel. Without substantive investments in early childhood, it will be difficult to mitigate opportunity gaps that have worsened because of the pandemic. A strong equitable early childhood system not only supports the well-being of children and families, but it is also key to the county's economic recovery and long-term success.

### **Additional Funding (*if available*)**

The Council applauds the investments in numerous Health, Housing and Human Services programs in the FY22 Advertised Budget proposal. We support and encourage the county to continue to identify, in partnership with human services system team members, co-location opportunities for affordable housing and human services programs as outlined in the Capital Improvements Plan.

If additional funds become available, there are several programs and services that the Council encourages the Board of Supervisors to consider in FY22. These include funding for ongoing **economic recovery efforts, production of affordable housing units, and mental health services**. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic challenges have had a negative impact on mental health across the entire population from children and youth to older adults. The isolation, depression, and fear surrounding the pandemic has heightened the need for access to mental health services more than ever and is an important reminder that there is no health without mental health. It is also critical to recognize the intersection between health care and housing and the need for both in order to create positive and sustainable outcomes for our residents.

Congress approved and President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 into law on March 11, 2021. As the County Executive prophesized in his budget message, ARP “includes additional aid to state and local governments, which could provide funding to the county on par with” the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund. It is critical that the Board provide the resources, including staffing and administrative tools, needed to maximize the county’s ability to deliver program services supported by ARP. These services include emergency rental assistance, emergency housing choice vouchers, homeowner assistance, and COVID-19 vaccine administration.

Finally, the Council asks the Board of Supervisors to view and use additional federal support under ARP to supplement and increase funding levels for the health and human services system in the FY22 Advertised Budget. The new, non-recurring federal dollars are not and should not be used as a substitute for funds that the County Executive has recommended, and the Board has advertised be allocated to the health and human services system in FY22 and beyond.

### **Conclusion**

FY22 is a challenging budget year. The COVID-19 crisis is still with us. Lives have been disrupted. We celebrate new heroes and are humbled by the sacrifices made by our neighbors and fellow Fairfax County residents and workers. Many additional county residents now need assistance offered by the human services system at a time when most county revenue streams are stagnant or down.

Against this backdrop, the FY22 Advertised Budget Plan builds upon Fairfax County’s success in utilizing federal stimulus funds, particularly the \$200.2 million received through the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund, to provide support to county residents during the COVID-19 crisis through numerous Health, Housing and Human Services programs. All adjustments within the FY 2022 Advertised Budget Plan are aligned with the nine priority areas in the [Countywide Strategic Plan](#), One Fairfax Policy and Chairman McKay’s equity [Task Force](#) to shape an equitable future for all residents. As the COVID crisis wanes and the economy recovers, the Council urges the County Executive to recommend and the Board of Supervisors to set future budget guidance for human services that not only aligns with, but meets the challenges presented by these initiatives.

The Council thanks the Board of Supervisors and acknowledges the leadership of County Executive Bryan Hill, Deputy County Executive Chris Leonard, and Chief Financial Officer Joe Mondoro and other staff in putting together a challenging budget for FY22. We give special thanks to the staff of the human services system and the many non-profit groups throughout the county that are addressing the COVID-19 crisis with compassion, care, and commitment. It is a reminder of the pride and professionalism exhibited everyday by those who choose public service.

We look forward to partnering with the Board of Supervisors, countywide staff, and Health, Housing and Human Services partners to build a thriving and equitable future for all residents in Fairfax County.

cc: Human Services Council  
Bryan J. Hill, County Executive  
Christopher Leonard, Deputy County Executive  
Joseph M. Mondoro, Chief Financial Officer