



**County Executive's FY 2018 Budget Public Hearing
March 8, 2018**

Testimony

Good evening County Executive Kittleman. As Immediate Past President of the Association of Community Services, it is my privilege to offer testimony on behalf of our 145 nonprofit member organizations and community advocates who help provide the safety net for thousands of vulnerable residents in our community.

Nonprofit Collaborative

Let me begin by taking this opportunity to thank you for your ongoing support of the Nonprofit Collaborative, which this month is celebrating its one-year anniversary of being open for business. The rent subsidy that is provided thru the Capital Budget continues to be critical to making the Collaborative a vital resource of coordinated and comprehensive human services. The Collaborative now has nine (9) full-time nonprofit residents; seven (7) agencies that maintain satellite offices; one part-time, 2 day per month user; and four nonprofits renting mailboxes at the NPC. This new space has increased outreach activities by NPC tenant organizations, facilitated the creation of collaborations among them, and improved their operational capacity. The Training Room and small conference rooms are consistently booked by NPC residents. Since NPC began renting meeting space to local nonprofits and government agencies, there have been 13 events.

More information about the successes and synergies of the Nonprofit Collaborative are included in our written testimony.

As importantly, we are seeing the anticipated synergies of having several agencies in one central facility. ACS is piloting a navigator program to connect those coming to the NPC with the broad range of services needed to effectively address the problems they are experiencing. Recently, a resident seeking services from the Housing Commission was referred by our Navigator to the Autism Society for assistance. Upon further discussion it became apparent that the woman was also a victim of sexual abuse. With just a phone call and the short walk across the NPC lobby the client was connected with a HopeWorks caseworker. Now the client is working with both agencies to bring safety and stability to her life. In the past three (3) months since she began seeing clients, the NPC Navigator has worked with 85 people guiding them to needed services.

We are looking forward with great anticipation to having the County's Department of Community Resources and Services, Department of Housing and Community Development, Community Action Council and Department of Social Services move to the Human Resources campus this spring and summer. The value of the Collaborative's one-stop resource center will be exponentially expanded.

FY 2019 Budget Requests

We have heard the cautious revenue projections for FY 2019 that, as we understand, have had you request that all Administrative Departments prepare budgets with a two (2) percent decrease in next

year's funding. Further we understand that there currently is a freeze on all hiring of non-essential personnel. We know, therefore, that you will be faced with difficult choices. As you consider your final budget proposal, ACS respectfully asks your consideration of the following.

1. Ensure fully operational Departments of Community Resources and Services (DCRS) and Housing and Community Development (DHCD). These two departments are the foundation of the County's safety net for economically and socially vulnerable individuals and families. With vacant key leadership and support positions in each Department, program management and oversight is not as effective as these critical funding streams merit. ACS asks that you work with DCRS and DHCD directors to identify and fill the positions they deem to be "essential" to carrying out their missions.
2. Increase Community Service Partnership (CSP) funding by 3 percent. The *2018 Self-Sufficiency Indicators Report* reflects a continuing increase in human services related need in Howard County. As we have in the past, ACS continues to assert that an increase in funding is essential to helping CSP awardees overcome their inability to remain competitive with the public and private sectors for well-qualified staff, to hire additional staff to respond to increasing workloads, and/or to absorb rent and other operations inflation-related increases without having to dip into program funding. Any *decrease* in FY 2019 CSP funding would further exacerbate awardees', and therefore the County's, inability to provide basic services that support the well-being and safety of our communities' most vulnerable residents at a level sufficient to decrease the economic insecurity of the 24,000 Howard County households that earn less than \$50,000.
3. Increase funding for the Housing Stability Subsidy Program (HSSP). The 16 DRCS administered HSSP subsidies have proven to be highly successful in helping households that became homeless, due to disabilities and other factors, to obtain and maintain stable housing. As Housing Choice and other federally-supported vouchers are already fully utilized and rarely available, local housing assistance programs such as HSSP must become a more substantive part of the County's Plan to End Homelessness.
4. Maintain current funding levels for Transfer Tax funded housing programs. The DHCD Settlement Down Payment Loan Program and Rehabilitation Loan Program are two County-funded programs that provide opportunities for moderate and low-income families to purchase and/or maintain affordable housing units. Any decrease in funding for these programs and others administered by DHCD will contribute to the well-documented severe shortage of affordable workforce housing in the County.
5. Continue funding for improvements in access to safe and reliable public and multi-modal transportation within the County. FY 2018 funding to improve bus stop accessibility and safety has been a good start toward helping disabled, senior and low-income populations manage the basic transportation needs associated with living independently and keeping jobs. But there remains a long list of shelter, crosswalk, lighting, curbs, median strip work to be done. ACS, as a member of the Pedestrian and Transit task group, will be working with Office of Transportation staff to help ensure that funding for these projects will be prioritized to ensure the most efficient and effective use of funds to meet these populations' needs. ACS supports full funding for the Bike Master Plan as an important element of the County's desire to establish a multi-modal transportation system to improve the mobility of current residents as well as to make the County more inviting for business and economic development.

In closing, Mr. Kittleman, I am pleased to reaffirm ACS's gratitude for the County's long-term commitment to the Nonprofit Collaborative and to establishing a Human Services Campus. I also appreciate this opportunity to share the issues that ACS has identified as meriting heightened attention and resources in FY 2019. We look forward to discussing with you and your team ACS's FY 2019 budget priorities. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Cliff Hughes

Cliff Hughes, Immediate Past President