



May 8, 2018

Mary Kay Sigaty, Chair
Howard County Council
George Howard Building
3430 Courthouse Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

Re: FY 2019 Executive's Proposed Operating Budget

Dear Ms. Sigaty,

One of the major strengths of Howard County is the relationship between government and the nonprofit sector. Government, through its funding, prioritizes support for delivery of community services, particularly in the areas of human services, the arts and the environment. Nonprofits leverage government funding with private donations to more cost-efficiently serve the economically and socially vulnerable in our community. We believe that history has shown that the stronger Howard County's nonprofit sector, the stronger our community.

The FY 2019 Executive's Proposed Operating Budget continues to reflect government's commitment to help maintain a strong nonprofit sector as an integral piece of the puzzle that keeps Howard County recognized as one of the best places to live in the country. ACS appreciates the proposed funding increases for human services and civic organizations as well as for important programs administered by County departments with responsibility for housing and transportation. As noted in these comments, however, our county is at best keeping up with the needs of our community's most vulnerable. We look forward to an ongoing dialogue with County leadership that will lead to reducing the numbers of low-income families, seniors, disabled and others who must rely on government and nonprofit resources and services to live in our County.

Community Service Partnerships/NP Capacity

As private funders have begun to provide fewer operations supported grants, the County's Community Service Partnership program continues to be the most important source of capital for staffing and business operations costs for many of the nonprofits that serve our community's most vulnerable populations. The proposed FY 2019 CSP budget is a \$616,000 increase over FY 2018. This additional funding would include awards of almost \$300,000 to Grassroots, Community Action Council, Bridges to Housing Stability and FIRN thereby continuing to focus county resources on basic shelter, stable housing and immigration services needed by low income households. Shifting last year's \$125,000 PAYGO support of the Mediation and Conflict Resolution Center to CSP funding is an appreciated step toward securing the organization's role as an important element in the County's human services safety net. Maryland Coalition of Families would be a first-time human services CSP awardee. The remaining \$150,000 CSP dollars would be distributed as increases over prior year funding among 17 awardees; and the final 8 awardees would receive level funding.

This second year of providing "One-Time Human Service" grants using PAYGO funds is appreciated as they enable specific projects that will increase the long-term capacity of nonprofits to serve our community.

Plan to End Homelessness (PEH)

PEH funding has been essentially static averaging about \$1.2 million since FY 2015. The consistency of this funding is supportive of the Plan, but without a significant funding increase the intent of the PEH—ending homelessness—will not be met. The County is losing ground on meeting the needs of households who are not able to find or maintain housing that they can afford. As of March 31, this fiscal year, 304 CSHS households exited the system, but

only 58% of them exited to permanent housing destinations, leaving 127 households exiting without permanent housing solutions. In the first nine months of this year CSHS received 916 housing crisis calls. Of those eligible for CSHS services, 229 were referred to case management, adding 500 households to the waiting list.

We are heartened to learn that an additional \$30,000 will be allotted to 1-3 (depending on family size) Housing Stability Support Program (HSSP) vouchers. That will bring the total HSSP vouchers to 19-22. These County-funded vouchers are used to house residents who have no capacity for various reasons to increase their income. They are a critical new resource to which many jurisdictions are turning as the federal pipeline of Housing Choice/Section 8 vouchers and other low-income supports has closed.

DHCD Housing

The proposed FY 2019 funding for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) as added support for loan programs that will enable residents and new home buyers the ability to renovate homes in aging neighborhoods. These programs offer opportunity for low and middle-income families to maintain the standards set by community associations and therefore remain in stable housing. ACS looks forward to working with DHCD in its efforts to expand the reach of the Moderate Income Housing Unit (MIHU) program to provide affordable *rental* housing for persons with disabilities and persons of very low income.

Transportation

ACS strongly supports the proposed FY 2019 Transportation Action Plan, but it will provide a very full plate for the Office of Transportation. The proposed operating budget indicates a 9 percent decrease in personnel funding for the Office of Transportation and an 8.8 percent increase for contractual funding. We would ask if having fewer staff will achieve putting in place the new fixed bus route configurations by next spring, while also initiating WalkHoward and Bike Howard Express plans and “initiating and completing a Countywide Strategic Highway Safety Plan” to reduce fatal and serious crashes. We sincerely hope that OTA will have access to the resources it needs to get its job done.

And finally, we would be remiss to not recognize and express appreciation for the \$222,000 allotted in the budget to help subsidize Nonprofit Collaborative rents. As the Collaborative enters its second full year of operation, I can personally assure you that this subsidy is working as planned to facilitate a synergistic environment that is making a difference in people’s lives.

As always, I shall be pleased to provide further information about these comments.

Respectfully,

Joan R. Driessen
Executive Director

Cc: Grace Morris, ACS President

The Association of Community Services represents 145 Howard County nonprofit organizations and community advocates