



*ACS supports Howard County nonprofits in the achievement of their missions  
because strong nonprofits improve the quality of life for all*

## **County Executive Calvin Ball's 1st FY22 Resident's Budget Hearing Testimony**

**December 9, 2020**

Good evening, Dr Ball. My name is Jumel Howard. I serve on the Board of Directors of the Association of Community Services and I am speaking tonight on behalf of ACS and our over 160 member organizations and community advocates.

COVID-19 has impacted the health of all of us greatly – including our economic and emotional well-being. It has highlighted the interdependency between Howard County Government and our nonprofit sector. The community has benefited from the strong relationship between our two sectors. Our established track record of collaborative partnership has allowed service providers to quickly pivot to meet the sudden explosion in basic needs. While we sincerely hope that vaccines and therapeutics will speed our recovery from COVID-19 and its impact in 2021, it is certain to leave a plethora of needs that will have to be addressed with a community-wide effort.

**Maintaining at least even funding for the Community Service Partnership grants is critical to responding to the basic needs of our residents and keeping nonprofits afloat. Additional funding, in the form of one-time grants, should also be considered to meet the most pressing needs created by this crisis.** Our nonprofit sector has repeatedly demonstrated how effectively it can leverage County money together with outside grants, donations, and the support of volunteers to address urgent needs. It is important that funding to support these organizations and their work be provided, otherwise, the County risks having to find other entities to maintain services or losing critical services altogether. The County's ability to continue responding to the pandemic is dependent upon maintaining a strong and effective nonprofit sector.

As in most emergencies, the current crisis has not been felt equally across our community. Those who were already most vulnerable have been hit hardest – people of color, women, low-wage workers, people with disabilities, and older adults. We have also witnessed how it is often these very people on whom our community is most dependent. We have to recognize this, find ways in which to address current needs, and **ensure that the County budget demonstrates its commitment to addressing these inequities over the long-term.**

One area of great importance is housing opportunities. The gap in affordable housing available to low-income families was already estimated to lay somewhere between 5,000 and 6,600 units prior to the pandemic. This gap has surely widened considerably as people's lives and livelihoods face increasing insecurity. **We urge you to demonstrate your commitment to the creation of affordable housing by including funding to meet the expanding need for these in your FY '22 budget.**



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We applaud the creation of the Housing Opportunities Master Plan. It is often said that a budget is a reflection of our values and that money speaks. **Creation of a Housing Trust Fund will be tangible proof of the Administration's commitment** to its recommendations. A variety of funding mechanisms could be explored, but creation of this fund will also demonstrate your determination to implementing these carefully considered recommendations.

While recognizing the fiscal impact of the current crisis and the uncertainty of developing a budget potentially without State or federal assistance, I urge you to take not only the actions needed to respond to immediate needs, but to set the stage for a robust recovery from it. We need a long-term vision and plan to get us through this pandemic and set the stage for a more equitable future.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening. As always, our nonprofit sector is prepared to work with County government to support our residents and ensure that this Howard County remains a place where everyone can thrive.