



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

Howard County Council Public Hearing: Proposed FY 2021 Operating Budget December 9, 2019

Testimony

As Executive Director of the Association of Community Services, it is my privilege to offer testimony on behalf of our over 160 nonprofit member organizations and community advocates who work diligently on behalf of vulnerable populations in our community. Our nonprofit sector values our strong collaborative relationship with the County as together we strive to meet the needs of residents. As the FY 2021 budget is crafted, we hope that you will weigh the increasing needs that the nonprofit sector observes and fulfills with the County's priorities and revenue projections.

First, I would like to offer *our* sincere gratitude for your ongoing support for the NonProfit Collaborative. Now in its third year, the Collaborative continues to broaden its reach and impact in Howard County. Our tenants continue to build collaborations and partnerships, expand their programs as well as the number of people served. and more effectively serve residents by referring clients with multiple needs to others service providers within the NPC and on the Community Resources Campus. The NPC also serves as an important resource to the broader nonprofit community and has seen a 50% increase in the number of outreach meetings and programs held at the NPC by local nonprofits.

ACS also applauds the County for its commitment to affordable housing. We look forward to the creation of a Housing Opportunities Master Plan that provides a clear path for expanding and preserving affordable housing that is critical to the 22% of Howard County households with incomes of less than \$60,000 who struggle to make ends meet.

We would like to note a few key opportunities to strengthen support for both nonprofits and the Howard County residents we serve:

- We appreciate the careful review of the Community Service Partnership (CSP) grant program and are confident that it will result in a process that better serves our community. While level funding for FY21 will provide stability to grant recipients as the CSP process is being revised, it will not account for the increasing cost of doing business or allow our nonprofit service providers to respond to increasing needs within our community. We urge you to consider funding that accounts for these.
- We congratulate the Department of Community services for its dedication to serving the homeless and its release of updated Plan to End Homelessness, The Path Home. Adequate funding of this plan will be critical to making this vision and priority for the County a reality.
- We strongly support the Office of Transportation's request for increased funding for bike infrastructure projects because a more robust investment in building and improving sidewalks, crosswalks and other projects will improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians. We encourage you to prioritize communities using the Vulnerable Population Index, as specified in CR-120, to identify spaces where the need for sidewalks, crosswalks, bus stops, and bike lanes are the greatest, such as Guilford, Elkridge, Savage and Jessup.

For more information about ACS priorities, feel free to contact us at any time and visit:

<https://www.acshoco.org/advocacy/our-priorities/>.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Driessen

Joan Driessen, Executive Director



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