



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

FY 2021 Operating Budget May 17, 2020

Testimony

As Executive Director of the Association of Community Services, it is my privilege to offer testimony on behalf of our over 170 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 we respond to the COVID-19 crisis and help our residents recover from the impacts of it, this relationship will be critical to keeping our community strong and thriving.

First, I would like to offer *our* sincere gratitude for your ongoing support for the NonProfit Collaborative. Now in its fourth 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. Having a hub where these services can be more easily accessed and coordinated will help residents recover from the impact of the current pandemic. 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. This percentage will likely increase as more residents experience unemployment, furloughs, and reductions in hours.

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 originally promised to provide stability to grant recipients as the CSP process is revised, this is no longer the case. We are concerned that as the need has vastly increased and our nonprofits financial stability has been seriously threatened by the COVID—19 crisis, stable funding will not be adequate to ensure that our nonprofits can meet the many critical needs in our community. Needs across the service continuum from housing and utility assistance, to mental and behavioral health, to food, childcare and transportation have dramatically increased. The hope is that emergency funding from the federal government will be available to help our nonprofits as they assist residents in recovering.



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- We congratulate the Department of Community Resources and 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.
- HCPSS will face increasing challenges as their students cope with the impact of the current crisis. Adequate funding for the Student Services Offices will be imperative. HCPSS will undoubtedly see a spike in the need for mental health, psychological and counseling services during the FY20-21 school year and Pupil Personnel Workers will be responding to expanding caseloads as more students and families will require additional support.
- We strongly support funding for the Office of Transportation's infrastructure projects. A more robust investment in building and improving sidewalks, crosswalks and other projects will improve safety and connectivity for pedestrians. We encourage the County 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.

Finally, I applaud the commitment, creativity and spirit of collaboration that our County government has exhibited in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. This will need to be supported with additional funding and/or flexibility in FY21 to keep County departments and nonprofit service providers stable and capable of responding to the surge in need in the coming months.

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,

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