



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

1st FY 2024 Resident's Budget Hearing Testimony

December 21, 2022

I am honored to offer testimony to advocate for a County budget that more fully supports Howard County nonprofits on behalf of the Association of Community Services and our over 150 member organizations and community advocates.

Last year, Howard County made notable strides in the budget to rise to meet a variety of County needs and respond to advocates' calls for action. For the first time, the Spending Affordability Advisory Committee's report for FY 2023 specifically recommended increased investment and support from the County to show the value of the partnership between County government and nonprofits and meet the needs we have. I want to particularly thank you for the \$25,000 in PAYGO funds given to ACS to support our executive transition this year and for allocating \$5 million to seed the Housing Opportunities Trust Fund (HOTF). The latter has been a long-time priority for ACS and many of our community partners. Given the recent release of the HoCo by Design Draft, the HOTF is that much more relevant and timely to meet the housing needs of the present and future in Howard County. Prioritizing housing is important -both for people served by nonprofits and for staff of nonprofits alike.

As you begin shaping the FY 2024 budget, we call on you to build upon the strides made last year so we have a well-resourced nonprofit sector in Howard County. Time and time again, we work collaboratively with County government, for-profit businesses, and fellow nonprofits to meet the needs of our residents quickly, effectively, and creatively. Nonprofits are skilled at leveraging County money together with outside grants, donations, and the support of volunteers to reliably ensure residents have access to food, can engage in the multicultural celebrations, stay housed, can sign up for benefits, get mental health support, can enjoy the arts, and so much more. Even with the incredible work that has been done so far with both limited resources and struggles to maintain staff at all levels, the expectation to "do more with less" is not sustainable or beneficial, and traditional forms of fundraising no longer yield the same results. Put simply, a nonprofit community that is not well-resourced cannot fully meet the needs of the people and communities we serve – and our [FY 2021 Self-Sufficiency Indicators Report](#) shows us that there is a lot more work to do in order for us to have a community where each person's needs are met.

We will all benefit from a County budget that includes the level of financial support that matches the true capacity required of nonprofits so no one gets turned away due to lack of available support. Short-term influxes of resources throughout the last couple of years has been a tremendous boost, *and* we must keep moving forward to make long-term strides. Our nonprofit workforce deserves wages and benefits that truly value the work we do, and our community needs fully staffed and well-resourced organizations.



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Our three key asks are:

1. **Dedicate robust funds for nonprofits' operational and program support without onerous application and reporting requirements. Identify County, State, and Federal resources to meet the infrastructure needs for nonprofits.**
2. **Increase funding for the Community Service Partnership grants and one-time grants, particularly to help recover from the many years of level-funding CSP grants.**
3. **Develop mechanisms (e.g., legislative actions) to enable multi-year grants for nonprofits so we can reliably plan for meeting community needs beyond an annual basis.**

As always, we are prepared to work with County government to ensure that our residents have equitable access to the services they need to thrive. Thank you for the opportunity to represent Howard County nonprofits.

Sincerely,
Val Traore, Executive Director