



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

## **2<sup>nd</sup> FY 2024 Resident's Budget Hearing Testimony**

**March 13, 2023**

The Association of Community Services (ACS) represents over 150 member organizations and community advocates in Howard County. Today, I submit this testimony to once again advocate for a County budget that fully supports Howard County nonprofits. Nonprofits are integrally involved in making Howard County the full-service jurisdiction that so many of us appreciate calling home. We not only meet direct service needs, such as food and housing, but also meet environmental, educational, and arts needs that are essential for living in the fullness of our shared humanity across the entire lifespan. Within all of that, ACS holds a critical role of offering support to nonprofits as they work to achieve their missions.

Nonprofits are skilled at working collaboratively with the County government and leveraging County money together with outside funding and volunteer support to effectively and creatively be reliable resources for our communities – *and* we need greater stability in the funding that comes with that collaboration. It is very timely that, for the second year in a row, the Spending Affordability Advisory Committee's (SAAC) report specifically emphasized dedicating funds for nonprofits in the FY 2024 budget when it said: "Nonprofits, which play a critical role in assisting residents in need deserve continued investment from the County to help provide needed services to residents."<sup>1</sup> A nonprofit community that is not well-resourced cannot fully meet the needs of the people and communities we serve. Our recently revised [FY 2021 Self-Sufficiency Indicators Report](#) illuminates both the depths of financial instability that many residents face here and where we need to focus our resources.

As you are finalizing the FY 2024 budget, we call on you to build upon the strides made last year so we have a well-resourced local nonprofit sector and can therefore continue making Howard County a full-service jurisdiction with and for people who live and work here. Even in looking at the challenging economic picture before us, we cannot afford to lose ground in building a sustainable nonprofit sector – especially since nonprofits in Howard County provide many essential services that are otherwise provided by government entities in other jurisdictions. We will all benefit from making long-term plans for each County budget to include the level of financial support that matches the true capacity required of nonprofits so we do not jeopardize the very services and programs that sustain and enrich our lives.

I would be remiss if I didn't continue to point out that, in addition to the broader needs noted above, our nonprofit workforce deserves wages and benefits that truly value the work we do. The investment in our nonprofit workforce is goes hand-in-hand with being well-resourced organizations. We continue to

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<sup>1</sup> FY 2024 Spending Affordability Advisory Committee Report:  
<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/sites/default/files/2023-02/SAAC%20FY2024%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>



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experience the effects of The Great Resignation and increasing challenges with recruitment by not having the resources to be as competitive as for-profit businesses with wages and benefits. The financial investment made into nonprofits creates many win-wins where we can keep our heads above water and the County can continue to have the programs and services residents desire.

As such, our three key asks for nonprofits are:

1. **Dedicate robust funds for nonprofits' operational, program, and capital support without onerous application and reporting requirements. Identify County, State, and Federal resources to meet the infrastructure needs for nonprofits, which includes the people infrastructure needed to meet the demands for services.**
2. **Mirroring the State's focus on vacancies in government offices, fully resource our local government offices, particularly those that work most closely with nonprofits, so we can provide critical services most expeditiously.**
3. **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.**

As a member of the Howard County Housing Affordability Coalition, we also urge you to invest \$10 million in the Housing Opportunities Trust Fund (HOTF) so we have a robust HOTF that gives us the means to be a County where housing is affordable at every income level. Affordable housing is an economic first tier infrastructure issue that also directly impacts us at every stage of life. Too many people in our community struggle to stretch their fixed, or low, and even moderate incomes to stay in their homes and still pay for food, medicine, transportation, childcare, and other basic necessities. We strongly urge you to incorporate new money in the HOTF so we can literally build a better future for us all.

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

Sincerely,  
Val Traore, Executive Director