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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Budget Public Hearing, Wednesday, April 12, 2023

Date	Wednesday, April 12, 2023
Place	Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Virginia
Length	4h 32m (video)

- Official meeting video (Fairfax County): https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/2819
- Official Board of Supervisors page (Fairfax County): https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-04. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:03] We're going to go ahead and get started in our second day of budget public hearings on Wednesday, April 12th, 2023. And again, this is the second of three nights of public hearings on the FY 2024 advertised budget plan, the advertised capital improvement program, CIP, fiscal years 2024 to 2028, and the FY 2023 third quarter review.

[00:00:26] And during this public hearing, we'll also accept testimony on the FY 2024 effective tax rate. And before I call our first speaker, I will just say I know that Supervisor Lusk, who was at the Council of Governments meeting, is on his way here and is running a little bit late.

[00:00:42] And I just want to make sure that folks understand that. And I do have a speakers list with 68 individuals who have signed up. And so I would ask all of our speakers, when we are getting close to your number, if you can please come down close to the podium so that when we call your name, you will be ready to deliver your testimony for your safety and also to make sure that we remain expeditious today as we get through all of the 68 speakers who have signed up.

[00:01:11] Our first speaker is Keith Merlin. Keith is here, I know, and as Keith is coming down, our second speaker will be Marlene Blum, who I know is here, and our third speaker is Renee Grebe, who I know is here, because I can see her, followed by Speaker 4 Corazon Sandoval Foley, who I also know is here.

[00:01:32] And so if all of you will be ready, that would be appreciated. And our first speaker, again, is Keith Merlin, the president of the Washington Airports Task Force, and has five minutes. Welcome. Thank you very much, Chairman McKay, and to all the members of the board. I appreciate the opportunity to speak here today.

[00:01:48] The Washington Airports Task Force respectfully crests the continuation of the Fairfax County grant to support our work in 2024. As a non-profit, non-partisan 501C3, Virginia Corporation, we're focused on the growth of passengers, cargo, and other aviation services at Dulles International Airport.

[00:02:07] In balance with Reagan Airport, our work improves Fairfax County's competitive position through expanding international domestic air service. When markets served from Dulles expand, it provides direct benefits for both the county's citizens and business travelers who depend on air service to visit family and businesses for work.

[00:02:25] The aviation industry has significantly had our two airports, Dulles and National, have now returned to above 2019 levels. Hallelujah. All the carriers at Dulles prior to the pandemic have returned, and the airport has added new carriers. The airport's authority, with support of United Airlines, has awarded a contract for a new 14-gate, 400,000-square-foot concourse.

[00:02:48] It'll ultimately replace concourse C&D, which is not a bad thing at all. A very positive sign of United's commitment to the growth at Dulles. However, having said that, the post-COVID environment has fundamentally changed commercial aviation. Smaller communities are not seeing the return of air service.

[00:03:06] Fuel prices are high, which is forcing airplanes to park smaller, less efficient commuter aircraft. The task force role in this new environment has continued to support United's growth to ensure that the airline operations at Dulles continue to be unrestricted 24-7 with the use of the latest data to identify aircraft noise-impacted areas.

[00:03:26] Accessibility to the Dulles is also being made easier through more predictable by supporting the efforts that are going on on 270, 495, and the American Legion Bridge on the Maryland side of the Potomac. And finally, and very importantly, we need to add a second Potomac River crossing to add access and provide our citizens options.

[00:03:48] Your continued sponsorship of the task force will allow us to support the airlines and to work with the businesses and tourism community in their efforts to grow and expand air service in our region. Lastly, we will continue to our role as a major force in advancing air service for Fairfax County businesses and residents, promoting enhanced connectivity, and driving economic development and job creation.

[00:04:09] Thank you very much for your continued support. Thank you very much, Keith. We appreciate your work. Thank you. Speaker number two is Marlene Blum, who is the chairman of the Fairfax County Health Care Advisory Board and also has five minutes. Marlene, welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay.

[00:04:27] Members of the board, I am Marlene Blum, chairman of the Health Care Advisory Board. Our complete statement with additional details has been sent to you and has also been sent again with this testimony. I'm here this afternoon to highlight several issues for the fiscal year 2024 budget and for future budgets.

[00:04:44] First, I'll focus on fiscal year 2024. The HCAB supports increases in employee compensation to help Fairfax County recruit, retain, and fairly compensate staff. Efforts to increase compensation and competitiveness are especially important for the health care workforce.

[00:05:01] For fiscal year 2023, the board wisely approved an increase of $7.5 million in order to staff one public health nurse in every county school in line with a state-mandated nurse-to-student ratio. Implementing this plan, however, has not been easy.

[00:05:19] The national nursing shortage that we've heard so much about continues to impact the health department's ability to recruit and retain school health nurses. For the same reasons, the HCAB also supports contract rate increases in the health department budget for mandated and non-mandated services.

[00:05:37] These primarily support school health services and safety net health care. The HCAB is also very pleased that the fiscal year 2024 budget includes an increase of $400,000 in the Department of Family Services for the Auxiliary Grant Program. This increase will be fully offset by an increase in state revenue. The Auxiliary Grant Program is a state and locally funded financial assistance program that provides supplemental income primarily to recipients of supplemental security income who live in a licensed assisted assisted living facility. The grant is critical to ensure that

[00:06:12] these individuals can sustain a basic standard of living. Currently, 160 Fairfax County residents receive these auxiliary grants. Now, for future funding. According to the new HHS Strategic Allocation of Resources Plan, otherwise known as STAR, an increase of $309,000 in change for two positions to continue expanding the health department's epidemiological capacity was requested for fiscal year 2024, but was not included in the budget. The HCAB is glad that the county executive has projected funding for these positions in fiscal year 2025.

[00:06:49] We thank the board for consistently supporting additional funding and positions for epidemiology during the past few years. Your wise investment in these efforts have enabled the health department to meet the extreme challenges of the COVID pandemic, to continue to diagnose and investigate public health hazards in our community and to develop new approaches in the delivery of population-based services in order to reduce inequities. These two additional positions are intended to enhance the Health Department's ability to continue to develop new approaches in order to meet the growing population health needs of the community. The plan is to embed one

[00:07:29] of these positions within the Community Services Board and the other within the Department of Family Services, but both would report to the Division of Epidemiology and Population Health in the Health Department. The embedded positions will help align services and programs across departments, improve the delivery of population-based health services, and contribute new insights and solutions to health problems in our community. I also want to focus the Board's attention on the comments in our complete statement regarding the inconsistent provision of improved technology to support virtual participation in the public in-person meetings

[00:08:06] of the county's boards authorities and commissions the board should be aware the conference rooms 9 and 10 to which the hcab and many other boards authorities and commissions are routinely assigned does not have the new video teleconferencing equipment provided elsewhere in the conference center furthermore the built-in assisted listening system in that room and the portable ones used in in the other conference rooms frequently just don't work this has been a long-standing problem it goes back way

before cove it has nothing to do with that that has never been appropriately addressed and it continues ensuring accessibility to all regardless of whether a special accommodation

[00:08:46] is requested improves public participation for all community members and brings the community closer to its One Fairfax goals. Closing, I want to note that these are the last budget hearings for several retiring board members.

[00:09:01] On behalf of the Health Care Advisory Board, thank you, Supervisor Gross and Supervisor Faust for your leadership and your attention to and support for services that protect and improve the health of our community and, indeed, your support for all human services.

[00:09:17] Thank you. Thank you very much, Marlene. We are now on speaker number three, Renee Grebe, Northern Virginia Conservation Advocate, Nature Forward, who also has five minutes. Renee, welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and Board of Supervisors. I'm Renee Grebe, Fairfax County resident, but testifying today as the Northern Virginia Conservation Advocate for Nature Forward.

[00:09:38] Nature Forward submitted a more robust set of comments in conjunction with 14 other partners as part of the Fairfax Healthy Communities Network, which I co-chair, and I wanted to highlight some of those asks today. Healthy communities do not exist in a vacuum, and the current climate crisis is affecting and will continue to affect how healthy and resilient our county is.

[00:09:58] Funding initiatives which reduce carbon emissions, mitigate heat island effects, and directly address the needs associated with stronger and more frequent storms is not optional. This is the time to address the climate crisis, not later. And so while Nature Forward is at our core an organization that inspires residents to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment, we also recognize the broader issues that must be addressed to help achieve that goal and address the climate crisis.

[00:10:26] So in that regard, I have five asks. First and foremost, we ask that you provide the funding needed to tackle the climate crisis. To reach the goal of carbon neutrality for Fairfax County by 2050 is a big lift, and we have to start lifting today and more aggressively. We have just seven years left to reach the first goal of reducing emissions by 50% by 2030.

[00:10:47] So please approve and fund the proposed three new FTEs for Charge Up Fairfax and CCAP. Funding of Resilient Fairfax is also critical, particularly given the impacts of climate change will fall on the most heavily on the most vulnerable people in the county who also lack the resources to be the most resilient.

[00:11:03] So please add funds for at least one new FTE to support Resilient Fairfax. We have heard from staff that they have requested at least one new position for the newly adopted plan, but it was not included in the submitted budget. Second, please support a more equitable and sustainable funding model for the Fairfax County Park Authority.

[00:11:23] The Park Authority's general fund support has decreased from about 3% in 2008 to 0.6% today, with 2008 emergency budget cuts being unrestored. FCPA's fee-based model is unsustainable, and it disproportionately penalizes low-income communities, ignores natural resource management, and excludes the true monetary value of ecosystem services provided by those natural resources.

[00:11:47] And while we appreciate the additional one-time funds proposed in the third quarter review, we ask that more funding come from the general fund. Please fund equity initiatives, including a mobile nature center, new activation staff, interpretation and translation services, and the park ranger pilot program.

[00:12:05] And please also support some ecological stewardship by beginning to fund FCPA's zero waste initiatives. Third, please provide additional and sustainable local investment for affordable housing. As you know, housing policy is climate policy. If people can afford to live closer to where they work, they will spend less time commuting and will produce fewer transportation emissions.

[00:12:27] Close-in affordable housing allows the opportunity to save more of our natural areas by reducing sprawl and the emissions that go along with it, something the county needs to do to meet its climate and resilience goals. We ask the board to fund its commitments to affordable housing, which includes the equivalent of two pennies on the $100 tax rate for housing needs.

[00:12:44] Fourth, please support more sustainable transportation options by investing in public transit, biking, and walking. Transportation accounts for 42% of the carbon emissions in our county. Public transit and good active transportation connections are a critical climate solution, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

[00:13:03] Please prioritize funding for our bus system to improve its frequency, reliability, and quality, and act on the active Fairfax transportation plan recommendations with care to site new transportation networks outside of sensitive environmental areas and with minimal tree loss.

[00:13:20] Related to this we ask you to enter into formal negotiations with VDOT. Maintenance of active transportation networks that are owned by VDOT is an ongoing issue and we suggest it would be helpful to clarify maintenance roles on all county roadways so as to provide FCDOT with a clear mandate and comprehensive scope for its maintenance budget. And lastly please increase funding to address food security. Two ways to do so are to provide $18,000 in matching funds to support and participate in a local food production strategic planning process which can help increase local commercial food growing and also commit to equity in community gardening

[00:13:55] by funding expansion of community gardens in food insecure areas and providing the necessary modest funds for annual maintenance of established community gardens at neighborhood and community service sites we recognize that nature forwards five asks span many facets of the county but all are important to support a healthy and resilient fairfax thank you for your time and consideration thank you renee uh speaker number four is corazon sandoval foley uh and she will be followed by michelle jefferson is michelle jefferson here michelle jefferson okay and uh nerman abdul

[00:14:31] Wahab. Okay. You will be speaker number six. Cora, welcome. Okay. Let me make sure this is okay. Good afternoon. Thank you for this chance to speak. My name is Corazon Sandoval Foley, the founding chairman of the Foley Community Center Project, also known as the Burke West Springfield Senior Center Without Walls. First, I object to the unmerited pay raise for part-time

[00:15:05] supervisor positions. I, Corazon Sanibel Foley, am the independent green candidate for Springfield Supervisor 2023, who voluntarily pledged, if elected, to donate the pay raise bulldozed by this Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to the Foley Community Center project, also known as the Burke-West Springfield Senior Center Without Walls. Second, the board should ensure efficient

[00:15:42] county performance, in particular by the Neighborhood Community Services, NCS, that used to be very professional under the leadership of Chris Leonard. NCS informed me on March 1, 2023 that it has not finalized the interim lease after a year since it approved our petition to lease the former dress barn store at Huntsman's Base. NCS also informed me that there is no date

[00:16:19] certain as to when the Foley Community Center project could operate at that lease facility. Many months after my testimony succeeded in getting board approval of renovation funds for the interim lease.

[00:16:38] Third, this board reneged on the 2016 agreement that I negotiated for our center to be included in the 2020 bond referendum. That 2016 agreement was negotiated by me with the former chairman, the Springfield District Senior Staff, and NCS.

[00:17:03] In response to several petitions, the county then promised to include our center in the 2024 bond referendum. And then the county reneged again and now promised to include our center in the 2026 bond referendum.

[00:17:22] We request that this board will not renege again on the promised inclusion of our center in the 2026 bond referendum that would provide fair and equal treatment, as in other magisterial districts, to those of us taxpayers in our underserved Springfield District hometown.

[00:17:44] Fourth, this board has ignored my petition to honor American patriotism by naming our center in honor of my husband, who co-founded the center with me, Vietnam veteran Michael Daniel Foley, who died exactly one year ago on April 12, 2022.

[00:18:04] I have petitioned on weekends at Poet Library to honor the American patriotism of the Foley family that served at the 1777 Battle of Saratoga in support of the founding of our American Republic and our American democracy in World War I, in World War II, and in Vietnam with Michael Daniel Foley.

[00:18:29] I have been made to understand that this board names facilities for supervisors, i.e. politicians, and not for American patriots who defended America for generations.

[00:18:44] And so I, Corazon Sandoval Foley, with a Vietnam veteran, Michael Daniel Foley, have decided to run as Independent Green Candidate for Springfield Supervisor 2023 to honor American patriotism and build the Foley Community Center to strengthen our underserved Springfield District taxpayer families.

[00:19:11] Thank you. Thank you, Cora. And speaker number five is Michelle Jefferson, chair of the Community Action Advisory Board, and has five minutes. Welcome. The floor is yours. Good afternoon. My name is Michelle Jefferson, chair of the Community Action Advisory Board, also known as CAB.

[00:19:30] Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. The CAB's mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of people experiencing poverty by influencing decision makers, providing funding and taking actions to address the root causes of conditions of poverty and injustice.

[00:19:46] As Fairfax County continues to recover from the COVID pandemic, we're seeing signs of economic improvement. However, people are still struggling and many needs remain. And we're likely to continue to see people struggling as the federal assistance and service provided during the pandemic are shut down.

[00:20:04] Benefits like SNAP, which have been rolled back, to pre-pandemic levels will leave people with the inability to provide food for themselves and their families the cab wishes to express support for the

investments proposed in the third quarter review package for food security homelessness services and emergency rental assistance these supports will ensure that the county can continue to support the basic needs of its most vulnerable residents people cannot thrive if they are consistently worrying about where they're going to live how they're going to put food on their table or if they have quality

[00:20:40] and affordable child care for their children my colleagues speaking after me will speak on the devastating impact of lack of affordable housing and the onerous burden of fun finding quality and affordable child care continued investment in health housing and human services are vital to addressing the challenges facing people in our communities effective and equitable service in these areas must be a priority if we are to ensure continued strong economic growth where all people thrive thereby creating a path to economic mobility not only for themselves but also their

[00:21:16] family which in turn strengthens fairfax counties fairfax county economically the cab is pleased to see the proposed fiscal year 2024 budget includes an increase to health and human service contract rate and employee compensation to address the problems community programs and county agencies are having in recruiting and retaining skilled and experienced staff we have heard from our community programs on how this issue has affected their ability to service while they're trying to find workarounds with a shortage of staff we must do everything possible to support the valuable

[00:21:54] work as they are on the front lines helping our communities every day our items that cab support are funding for non-profits managing the county's homeless shelters support for work and work innovation skills hub also known as wish located in the highball valley community center funding for patrick henry family shelter the creation of manufacturer housing coordinated position in the department of housing and community development springfield center with throughout walls funding for one Fairfax training. As you consider the budget items before you and contemplate a potential

[00:22:29] reduction in the real estate tax rate, the CAB requested the board not cut HSS programs to offset spending reductions. The CAB would also like to request that the board fund either the FY 2024 budget or other available fund programs that help individuals and the family attain, retain affordable places to live. Being without a safe and sustainable home is debilitating to our neighbors and negatively impacts the economic growth of the community additionally affordable child care can represent a significant expense for families it is one of the most important

[00:23:05] employment supports that can be provided to families experiencing poverty the cab would like to see the board of supervisors make an ongoing commitment to expanding the early childhood system to ensure families have the support they need to be members of the workforce in closing i would like the board i would like to recommend to the board look at housingmatch.org as a potential housing solution housingmatch.org is a program designed to uh it matches people to um have houses it matches them to be partners in and other people's homes it's a model and

[00:23:43] we'd like you to take a look at that and see if it's something that we could use in our county Additionally, as you move forward in the future, planning the CAB respectfully requests that $0.02 of the real estate tax be considered dedicated to the preservation of affordable housing.

[00:24:02] Thank you again. Thank you, Ms. Jefferson. And our speaker number six is Nermin Abdelwahab. I hope I'm pronouncing that right. Close. Okay. Nermin Abdelwahab. I'm a member of the CAB. I'm also an attorney at Legal Services of Northern Virginia.

[00:24:20] I want to thank you for this opportunity to talk to you about the cab and our concerns as it relates to residents of the county who are experiencing poverty. We are facing a housing crisis in the county. Low-income individuals in our community, including long-term residents, are being priced out of the county.

[00:24:38] I've had an opportunity to practice eviction prevention in the GDC court, and I watched every Friday as hundreds of residents, mostly black and brown, faced eviction as they tried to keep up with the rising rents. The effects of these evictions can cause years of instability.

[00:24:56] And I invite each of you to attend one of these eviction dockets on Friday. I'm sure the Ellis and Vee housing team would love to have you at their weekly outreach. There are neighbors that are being affected by the housing crisis are those living in poverty.

[00:25:12] They are the ones being most affected by the housing crisis. Currently, a family of four's income would be $27,750 for the federal poverty line.

[00:25:32] In Fairfax, the median income is $140,000 for a family of four, and 60% of that is actually 300 times the poverty line. So we are missing a huge gap when we talk about low-income housing.

[00:25:50] In 2021, 7.1% of households in the county lived in poverty, according to the Census Bureau. That is 29,000 residents in the county living in poverty. Currently, the county has about 5,500 housing vouchers or project-based vouchers.

[00:26:12] That leaves 20,000 households without a federal subsidy. And those families' needs are not being met. Sadly, many of those living in poverty are unable to access the low-income housing options as there are minimum income requirements.

[00:26:38] This includes many of the housing Fairfax County actually owns. Many of those clients are forced into illegal housing situations or housing situations that are substandard. The cab has also noticed an increase in more and more studio and one-bedroom units being designated as low-income.

[00:26:56] families are often unable to access those units in Fairfax there are 23,000 children living in poverty I've heard personally from many family members who have told me that they are unable to find three and four bedroom units that is affordable in the county while the board has increased the pledge to increase the number of affordable housing units they can't I can't find any data that actually address the need for three or four bedrooms and how to meet that needs.

[00:27:27] I'm going to take this last minute to thank the board for its housing blueprint and remind the board that it has set out four goals on that housing blueprint and has only met one of those goals each year. That housing blueprint has three goals that are left not met, that of special needs residents, that to address homelessness, and that to address working families. Thank the board for its time. Thank you very much.

[00:27:53] Speaker number seven is Maria Oliva. She'll be followed by Dave Edelman and Joy Bryan. And if you're here, make sure you're in a position to safely get to the podium. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Maria Isabel Alfonso.

[00:28:12] I am a regional representative of the Fairfax County Community Action Advisory Board. I want to thank the board of supervisors for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the CAP and individuals and families living in Fairfax County that are struggling to afford high-quality child care. As a result, have to

sacrifice their place in the workforce and have to have fewer opportunities to improve their economic mobility. In Fairfax County, the average cost for a full-time child care for a preschooler ranges from $16,000 to $22,000 per year.

[00:28:51] These costs go by several thousand dollars for an infant. There are about 7,900 families in Fairfax County with children who have an income below $25,000. As you can see from these numbers, child care can represent a significant expense for a family and can make employment and economic independence difficult to reach and maintain.

[00:29:17] I can speak from my personal experience in this issue. Funding and paying for child care has been a very challenging experience for me. When I had my first child, I stayed at home during the day and studied English at night for a year.

[00:29:34] After that, I was required to work so I could help with the needs of my home and my growing child. This is when the challenge began. I looked everywhere for a suitable in-home care for my son that I could afford. He went through four different child-in-home child care, and my son didn't do well.

[00:29:57] He went through four different caregivers with very bad experiences. He would scream every time I left him at a child care giver place. It was heartbreaking to have to leave him in places where he did not feel safe.

[00:30:14] I could not find a place for him that I could afford where I felt he would be well cared for. But I had to keep trying because I had to work to contribute to my family's needs. In order to work, I have to have child care. In order to afford child care, I have to work.

[00:30:31] I have to have a job. This is a never-ending, anxiety-provoking cycle that many families face every day. The COVID-19 pandemic affected the operation of child care providers in the county, causing a decrease in child care slots. This decrease has an impact on working parents who rely on these resources.

[00:30:53] The cost of child care also results in disparities in the ability of households with various income levels to manage child care and employment, as I highlighted with my personal experience. As of March of 2021, 15% of mothers with an annual income between $25,000 and $100,000 were not able to work due to the child care responsibilities.

[00:31:18] As you consider budget and the measures before you, please ensure that providing families with the necessary resources to keep their child care well cared for uneducated is our top priority. Thank you so much. Thank you very much. Speaker number eight is David Edelman, chair of Invest in Fairfax Coalition.

[00:31:38] Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and fellow boards of the supermarket. My name is David Edelman. I'm speaking on behalf of the Invest in Fairfax Coalition, a grassroots coalition of faith leaders, county employees, PTA members, parents, and many more.

[00:32:06] And I want to reflect on my 21 years of testifying at these budget hearings, and I come on the old question that we put our money where our values are and what we want. And so how do we do that?

[00:32:22] How do we invest in Fairfax? Well, I certainly applaud the county strategic plan. I think it's a first step on thinking what those things are. This is the second year I'm asking that we sort of benchmark that plan and have an execution plan so that we can measure our success on that plan.

[00:32:48] This year, I've seen many years, the revenue goes up, the revenue goes down, and we always come to the point of sustainability how do we sustain a steady state and keep things balanced through good and bad years we've seen inflation is hot you know that we haven't seen in decades now and um that is the challenge as we face health care um you know lots of needs in the schools in terms of learning delay and learning loss as well as public safety um i sense in the

[00:33:26] board the mind that we should balance that we should increase employee compensation greater than what was advertised as well as reduce the tax rate and I think that this is a fine plan and I think that we have enough money in the 90 million dollars to do both that I think we can you know compensate employees properly as well as give some tax relief to taxpayers who are feeling the um inflation i think both can be done um you know i uh i think what i have noticed and i've

[00:34:02] talked to uh people in the county is we are experiencing quite a lot of attrition in both the county schools and in um county employees and i think we we need to figure on how to stop that and certainly compensation is one way to do that um i you know we have talked before in past and i I just want to reiterate this, that I've talked about many times, which is broadening the tax base.

[00:34:28] I mean, I think the board should look at all the tools it currently has to broaden the tax base, as well as I understand that we run under the Dillon rule, and we should lobby down at the General Assembly to get more taxing authority.

[00:34:47] So once again, Invest in Fairfax appreciates you listening, And we continue to look forward to working with you on the budget. Thank you. Thank you very much. And our speaker number nine is Joy Bryan, who is the chair of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board.

[00:35:03] Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Joy Bryan, and I am the chair of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board. The Criminal Justice Advisory Board supports the continued use and expansion of Diversion First.

[00:35:21] As you know, Diversion First is a collaboration between the Sheriff's Office, Police Department, Fire and Rescue Department, Fairfax County Court System, Department of Public Safety Communications, the Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board, and other county agencies and stakeholders to offer alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness, co-occurring substance use disorders, and other developmental disabilities who come into contact with the criminal justice system for low-level offenses. Diversion First aims to prevent encounters with the criminal justice

[00:35:55] system, improve public safety, promote a healthier community, efficiently utilize resources, and most importantly, assist individuals to recover and take control of their lives. Positions supporting Diversion First have continued to allow the Sheriff's Office and Fairfax County Police Department to dedicate staff and provide support 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the Sharon Boulevard Center for Community Health, where individuals with behavioral health issues can receive services instead of being taken to jail. Having diversion services available around the clock is a

[00:36:31] fundamental aspect of diversion first and is recognized as the best practice in crisis intervention. Since 2016, over 3,200 diversions from potential arrests have occurred. Furthermore, consistent with previous years, over 80 percent of individuals that law enforcement transferred to the Bolivar Center for Community Health in 2021 did not have a repeat visit related to criminal justice

involvement within a year. Nationally and locally, jurisdictions are looking at ways to triage and respond to behavioral health crisis. As part of Fairfax County's commitment to a

[00:37:07] community crisis response, in fiscal year 2022, the county implemented the co-responder model, which pairs a community services board crisis intervention specialist and a crisis intervention team-trained police officer to respond to 911 calls that are related to behavioral health issues.

[00:37:27] Fairfax County currently has co-responder teams which provide opportunities for intervention before a behavioral health crisis begins or at the earliest possible stage of involvement with public safety. The goals of the co-responder teams are to provide the right service at the right time by the right person, link community members in crisis as well as their families to needed services and support, divert individuals from potential arrests whenever possible, minimize unnecessary hospital visits, and maximize safety for all involved. This program has been proven to be

[00:38:04] an effective approach in responding to and de-escalating behavioral health crisis. We recommend that the county continue to prioritize identified gaps in critical services across the continuum and focus on providing services at all intervention points.

[00:38:20] For example, the supervised release program is a pretrial program that provides extensive case management services and access to treatment as a condition of a defendant's pretrial release. The three Fairfax County specialty dockets, the Veterans Treatment Docket, Drug Court, and the Mental Health Docket provide diversion through a structured process that integrates treatment and court supervision, providing a path out of the criminal justice system.

[00:38:48] In addition, jail-based behavioral services at the Adult Detention Center provide incarcerated individuals with needed mental health, substance use disorder, and or developmental disability services. Furthermore, community reentry programs and community-based services assist offenders post-reliefs.

[00:39:08] The proposed multi-year budget, which includes the framework for the FY25 budget, identifies proposed funding to support the continued implementation of the Diversion First initiative, including the potential expansion of the co-responder program.

[00:39:24] We support expansion and continued implementation of the co-responder model and other Diversion first initiatives. Thank you. Thank you very much, Joy. Speaker number 10, also from the Criminal Justice Advisory Board, Herbert Kemp, who will be followed by Dave Lyons, Kerry Wilson, and Cindy Spies. If you all are here, make sure that you're ready for testimony. Thank you. Welcome. Thank you.

[00:39:49] Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Supervisors. I'm Herb Kemp, and I serve on the Criminal Justice Advisory Board with Ms. Bryan and my other colleagues on the board. My purpose here today is to convey the support of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board for continued operation of the teen centers across Fairfax County. These centers play an important role in providing a positive after-school environment for many of our teenage population. Fairfax County continues to offer services for teens both after school and during school vacations. According to the county's descriptions, teens participating in these programs, quote, are connected with positive role models

[00:40:28] and participate in a variety of activities and projects designed to keep teens engaged and to support their physical, mental, and social development. The programs are intended for students in grades

7 through 12. Fairfax County supports these programs through four teen centers and eight drop-in sites across the county.

[00:40:50] The teen centers include the Reston Teen Center in northern Fairfax County, the South Teen Center at the original Mount Vernon High School in Alexandria, the James Lee Teen Center in Falls Church in eastern Fairfax County, and the Mott Teen Center in western Fairfax County.

[00:41:07] Each of these four areas are also supplemented by two drop-in centers each. The programs vary by center. For example, the South County Teen Center for March through May of 2023 offers such activities as sports and readiness, including various workout routines, classes, and cultural recipes, A program titled Let's Get Moving to Develop Athletic Movement, Creative Minds, Arts and Crafts Programs, and a program called Girl Talk for Female Participants.

[00:41:38] The James Lee Teen Center in Falls Church offers school programs including homework assistance, spring teens action camp during spring break, and an advanced karate program twice a week. A special note, the James Lee Teen Center also hosts the Fairfax Falcons wheelchair sports and fitness on Saturdays.

[00:42:00] The South County Teen Center operates at the original Mount Vernon High School. South County Teen Center includes sports activities such as basketball, kickball, volleyball, dance, and jump rope. South County Center also supports a snack and separate program with a healthy choice of USDA nourishment to participants.

[00:42:23] The Reston Teen Center supports programs ranging from weight training to cooking and arts and crafts. One unique program in development in Reston is the Aerospace Exploration Program. This twice weekly program, a virtual program, is led by high school students via Google, meets to explore esteem, and to participate in solo projects.

[00:42:45] We recommend that these programs be sustained at their current levels. Thank you for your time and for your support. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is David Lyons, who's representing the Fairfax Workers Coalition. Has five minutes, will be followed by Carrie Wilson, Cindy Spies, and Roberta Gosling.

[00:43:03] We are on speaker 11. Mr. Lyons, welcome. Hey, good afternoon. It's good to see everyone again, members of the board, Mr. County Executive. Good to see you, and I'm glad to be on early today, I'll tell you that. For many years, myself, many others come before this board at this time of year, and what we do is ask for things for county employees.

[00:43:28] And I value the public process and the important role it always seems to play. But sometimes it's kind of a weird dynamic in that you sit up there, we stand out here. And it's kind of like we're making this plea to get more money every year. And it often strikes me that it kind of really doesn't fulfill the needs of county employees asking you to pay what it's recommended you pay.

[00:43:54] So we know there are rules. It's a system. And we have to go through this. But I would love to see something different just for once. Let's start with the obvious. We know you're going to raise the proposed MRA.

[00:44:13] However, why don't you say tonight you're going to pay the full MRA at 5.44% and kind of put an end to all this other, you know, nonsense that we have to do this or ask for that because it's what you're

supposed to do.

[00:44:30] And I say to you, wouldn't it be a fun thing to fully fund it for the first time two years in a row since the early 21st century? I mean, couldn't we do that? Wouldn't that feel good to the board to actually fulfill that number that's been promised? and keep in line with other jurisdictions who are paying far more than their recommended MRA, the reason is we need to start seeing this not just as what's left over or what we can fund or what we have in the budget.

[00:44:59] We need to look at employee pay as what keeps us competitive in the regional market in terms of attracting and keeping quality employees. I think that's kind of what's missing. So we need to do, in addition to that, take a full and fair look, as we're beginning to do at making sure that people are receiving pay that makes us competitive with other jurisdictions.

[00:45:24] We're not doing that now. So let's just declare this is what we're going to do because it's the right thing to do. And I think you know it's the right thing to do. It will, more importantly than fulfilling your promises and more importantly than helping county employees, it will send the right message.

[00:45:48] That's really very important right now. People out there, I'm telling you, don't believe you value them as much as you should. That's what this would do. It would send that message that you value them. And one of the reasons I want to do this is because every year we come up here and talk about pay.

[00:46:06] And my thought is that if we got that out of the way, maybe we could talk about something else. Maybe we could talk about health insurance, the cost it imposes on employees, ways to make it better, services we could provide. Maybe we could talk about contracting out. Right now, half of your solid waste is being contracted out.

[00:46:23] I understand because of the equipment and the manpower shortage that you're going to have to do this at times to get over day to day. But I say to you, contracting out county services and jobs is not the answer. It is not the long-term answer.

[00:46:41] You've got to do better than that. We need to keep these good county jobs. I think we need more mechanics and better pay in DVS. I want to give a little shout out to the county executive, who I understand has helped in that process in terms of making sure that equipment is being fixed on time.

[00:47:02] But there were many days recently in public works that workers were sitting around because they had nothing to get on. They didn't have equipment. So now we have to look at contracting that too. None of that is the answers. Human services continues to need more workers.

[00:47:17] His care needs increased. Not everyone can telework. School-age child care workers, now part of NCS, are still understaffed and have responsibility for our children. We should also look at expanding child care opportunities for county employees.

[00:47:33] And these are just a few of the things that I don't think we ever get to talk about because we're talking about an MRA that you should just fulfill and pay and not make it a contingent item that we maybe pay for or maybe we pay for part of it every year.

[00:47:49] That's what I'm asking you to do, because if we want to be the culture we claim to be, if we want to fulfill the ideals that we espouse, this is what we're going to have to do. And it starts with paying our workers what they're supposed to be paid. Thank you very much.

[00:48:06] Thank you, Dave. And we are on speaker number 12, Gary Wilson, who is the co-chair of the Affordable Housing Advisory Council and has five minutes. Welcome. Thank you. Thank you so much for all of your service to the residents of Fairfax County.

[00:48:23] every day and for the ability to be here when you rechartered the affordable housing advisory council or ahac in 2021 your charge to us was to look not just at monitoring our progress against goals for affordable housing but also to bring to you strategic recommendations about preservation new development strategies and to look at issues such as the intersection of homelessness the service needs service enriched housing and service needs that i think were so eloquently

[00:48:57] covered earlier today by representatives from cab and the attorney for legal services it's what we've been living i will tell you that your appointed representatives to ahac have embraced this charge and have really come forward i think with the unequivocal commitment that housing is foundational not just to the county's economic success but for every resident and it is the foundation for meeting your commitment to one fairfax we also heard someone asking about the goals so before

[00:49:32] i get into the ass i would like to thank you really applaud this board county staff for the commitment we've made and such progress as it has been made since 2018 when we delivered the community-wide housing strategic plan and those things are you know doubling you all doubling the goal to provide 10 000 new units a commitment to no net loss of affordable housing the work that's being done on a preservation strategy that looks at not only maintaining new existing affordable homes but our manufactured housing stock you increased sort of elevated the issues in our

[00:50:10] the virginia legislative agenda took some of ahec's recommendations to really put housing and supportive services front and center rental assistance all of the programs that are so critical to this work and also recognizing the investments that we need in our staff here at the county and in the non-profit providers that help you achieve this goal so we're so grateful and that action is really evident in what has been invested through one-time funds where you have cobbled together resources to put into for example the residency government center two that

[00:50:46] we're very proud to be part of and somos at tyson's as well as ovation those commitments haven't been really important and we appreciate that fact and as we move forward every time you can look at that one-time funding we ask you to prioritize that for this foundational goal we see that in this budget this year in addition i will just say some of the projects that have brought us to the goals that we've achieved is 45 million dollars in arpa and other funds and the investment of 10

[00:51:22] million dollars that is in this budget from the fy 2023 carryover that is essential because unfortunately the budget request currently falls short of the goal that you have committed to to get us to that two pennies on the real estate tax that is essential if we're going to meet the future why because we've already committed all the money we have to the projects in the pipeline and there are a lot more coming and really important initiatives that you all will see you've heard about the needs the rising rents everything that our residents that people are experiencing certainly we know the shelters are full people are sleeping in the streets we need to do more

[00:52:01] and so where we can asking you all recognizing that there are so many additional needs but consider the 90 million that you have to invest and perhaps investing in an additional half penny or even one penny that's only 32 million to join the committed resource that we have today to move forward so we ask that respectfully honoring and applauding all you've done but saying this is not going to get easier

finally i'd like to just reference again thank you for the commitment and certainly the work that's being done for the homeless service providers

[00:52:40] and thinking about the other supportive services supervisor paulchick has been i think very understanding as we think about and we ask you consider when we're developing housing let's plan along the same time of what are going to be the service needs and maybe begin to think about that process so we move forward together i started the day in herndon at health works with dr gloria and we were celebrating the opening of the dedicated dental clinic that's going to serve people in need in herndon and rest in the area and even in that conversation today it was

[00:53:17] so evident everything we talk about is foundational that is the work that you do housing is a big piece of it, and it takes all of this for a community. So thank you. Thank you very much, Carrie. Speaker 13 is Cindy Spees, who is Environmental Advocacy Lead, Lewinsville Faith in Action. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[00:53:41] My name is Cindy Spees. I represent Lewinsville Faith in Action, a group in Fairfax County focused on ethical issues such as our obligation to heal environmental degradation and to mitigate the effects of global warming on all of our residents. We agree with advocates like those from Fairfax Healthy Communities and Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, CECAN, Nature Forward, and others who are here in the room. And this week, we'll be talking to you and promoting the fiscal and ecological health of our park authority, which is the major steward of our

[00:54:17] county's natural resources. Since I spoke with you all a year ago about the importance of our parks, I've taken a closer look at the state of our trees. To my shock, I have seen how all of our urban forest fragments are threatened, not only by development pressures, which we know about, but also by invasive plants and other pests.

[00:54:41] Across the county, many of our trees have already died, and our remaining tree canopy is dwindling. I volunteer with Tree Rescuers, an initiative of Plant Nova Trees, and with the county's invasive management area program many of us go forth diligently every week to try to save our parks trees from invasive destruction we cut smothering english ivy we cut wintergreen and porcelain berry and oriental bittersweet and you name it the chattering songs

[00:55:15] of the birds and the canopy are the music of our work and the exuberant thanks of the tree of the park users and the trail users is our inspiration but our numbers are small compared to the number of trees in peril there are 24 000 acres of parkland here in the county and only a few hundred of us volunteers who are putting our proverbial fingers and clippers in the dike to hold back the damage so on behalf of the trees and all of us who benefit from their presence i ask that you

[00:55:53] consider increasing your help in the Fiscal Year 24 budget. We appreciate very much your leadership in funding natural resources and park equity in last year's budget. Thank you. And some of the Fairfax County Park Authority requests for this budget year have already been funded or are being looked at it being funded in the third quarter review. Thank you again. However, other staff requests need attention, and there may still be some opportunities in the fiscal year 2024 budget

[00:56:27] to save more of our forests, to fund more tree planting programs, and to make access to our parks more equitable. I know this board is interested in relieving homeowners tax obligations, but don't forget that, and let me just back up a little bit, don't forget that every single resident deserves equal access

to the benefits of healthy natural resources. That's what makes our county a great place to live and to work. It will not take much of the unallocated funds that

[00:57:03] we're talking about to shore up the immediate areas of need. I've included some suggested items in the written version of these remarks that I will give to the clerk to pass to you. In conclusion, by the next budget cycle, fiscal year 2025, we hope to see a much more robust and holistic approach to funding the park authority's natural resources and its equity programs. We hope to see long-term stable funding, reducing the reliance on these one-time grants from third quarter reviews and carryovers as much as we are glad to see them when they come

[00:57:38] that way. Finally, I'd like to say our CCAP and Resilient Fairfax plans urge all residents to become involved in saving our precious natural resources and to mitigate and adapt to climate change repercussions. Likewise, our county government can do no less than what it's asking of all of its residents to commit to protecting and growing these resources equitably for everybody's future benefit. So we look forward to working together with you to make this vision a

[00:58:13] reality thank you thank you cindy and speaker number 14 is roberta gosling who is chair of cornerstones board of directors and speaker 15 is james waller is james here james here okay you will be uh our next speaker and terence strowman speaker 16 is terence strowman here okay excellent uh roberta welcome the floor is yours all right thank you so much thank you chairman mckay thank supervisors thank you clerk and thank you to the county staff i truly appreciate the support for

[00:58:51] social services that you've already heard and for the supporters in the room my name is roberta gosling i'm a rest and proud rest in resident with supervisor alcorn a business owner a founder co-founder of the south lakes high school ptsa food pantry and i'm here today representing cornerstones i'm the board chair of cornerstones and i've spoken with you before and i appreciate your time as rents are rising inflation continues and pandemic era protections and supports are ending more and more families are relying on our local network of non-profit human service providers for the help and support that they need as federal dollars and programs are ramping down

[00:59:31] not-for-profits like cornerstones we're ramping up and our human and our community human service partners are, as I said, ramping up and we need the county's support so that we can continue to help our neighbors. Recovery has not been easy, particularly for communities of color who make up a large part of our service industry, including food service employees, delivery drivers, school custodians, and bus drivers. Each of these constituencies make up the diverse and vibrant Fairfax County we call home. Further, last month as grocery prices continued to spike,

[01:00:08] Many families were hit with a decrease in their SNAP benefits, along with pandemic-related benefits. As a result, local community pantry programs, including Cornerstones and the South Lakes High School Pantries, are seeing a spike in the number of people who are coming to our pantry. In fact, Cornerstones just this past month has seen an increase of 50% in food requests.

[01:00:29] The South Lakes Food Pantry, since January 5th, has seen an increase of 25% for student shoppers, up to about 200 every single week and 17 percent for families who come across our curbside distribution which is about 150 families every week at the same time tenants are facing unprecedented rate hike red hikes the end of pandemic era protections against eviction are forcing more people to seek emergency shelter today the embry record community shelter is at capacity as a result every single week we are sending thousands of dollars spending thousands

[01:01:04] of dollars of county and government funding to house families in hotels, just to ensure that our families and children aren't on the street and have shelter. And if skyrocketing food and housing costs weren't enough, thousands of Northern Virginians are set to lose their Medicaid coverage as well, again, because pandemic-era protections are coming to an end. Without a doubt, the pandemic has so clearly revealed the fragile nature of our health, economic, and social structures for everyone in our community but those who have been hit the hardest are families struggling to live and work in our community even before 2020 and they continue to feel really the

[01:01:43] sharpest and deepest impacts and we see that every single day i do want to commend fairfax county we've made progress on looking at the budget through an equity lens and that's really due to all of all of what you have done in this room and for that we're incredibly appreciative it's with this equity lens in mind as well as the growing equity in our communities that cornerstones endorses the following items in addition to those already spoken about i want to highlight three one affordable housing the budget currently includes 10 million dollars as a minimum commitment to support affordable housing projects currently in the pipeline however in order for the county's

[01:02:20] board of supervisors to meet the goals that you you have set we must do more to commit long-term sustained funding to that end we endorse the need to commit the additional half penny today towards a baseline equal to two pennies of the real estate tax second human services including an additional 10 million dollars for human services from pandemic related reserves to provide necessary services that people in our community need now including additional capacity building and infrastructure support for your non-profit partner partners to address the most pressing needs that you've already heard about and finally food insecurity which is one of my pet projects

[01:02:58] at cornerstones we truly believe that we can stamp out food insecurity in fact we're looking to stamp that out by in the next five years we live in one of the highest income regions in the state and yet we have neighbors who are going hungry including more than 50 000 children who qualify for free and reduced lunch right here in fairfax county further we know that food is going to waste and we see that as a result it's critical to continue to partner with and support local food pantry and feeding programs cornerstones is opening a food hub to help streamline food collection and distribution in western fairfax county so that families can put healthy nutritious

[01:03:37] meals on their kitchen tables and we we look forward to see to seeing help in that funding as well finally we're grateful for the contract rate adjustments and other investments included in the budget including additional funding for homeless service providers these adjustments are incredibly important for recruiting and retaining the high quality staff needed to do our work creating budgets and i'm finishing up creating budgets means having to make hard choices the influx of pandemic related funding over the past few years has helped us address the crisis but that funding is ending and now is the time to create local long-term sustainable solutions for families

[01:04:14] struggling to make ends meet. Again, I thank you for your time. Thank you very much, Ms. Gosling, for your testimony. And speaker number 15 is James Waller, who's the president of Friends of Colvin Run Mill. Welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and the Board of Supervisors to give me this opportunity to speak to you today. I'm James Waller, president of the Friends of Colvin Run Mill and a member of the Fair Parks Initiative. I would like to thank you all for your support of parks and since is one of this one of your last budget hearings supervisors of house thank you for your strong and consistent support for colvin

[01:04:50] run mill park thank you very much sir today i'd like to emphasize a couple of part points regarding the park authorities advertised budget specifically the need for more resources for people and for trees otherwise known as standing people as i will explain i applaud the advertised budgets proposal for a two percent raise for all employees and increases for merit and longevity pay. According to the Park Authority, providing the same pay increases for park staff funded from park-generated revenue will cost about $1.4 million and will have to be recaptured from increasing fees at the parks. Is this

[01:05:29] the best approach, given that the revenue model is already distorting the purpose of the parks and is being studied for possible revision? I respectfully ask that these pay increases for these revenue-based staff should be made from the general fund. Also important is ensuring that all park personnel slots are filled. It seems to be a regular practice that funds are diverted from staffing to take care of other needs. A sounder budget approach would be to meet these needs from the general fund and make sure that all authorized positions are filled. Last fall, the resource management division, the division that staffs the parks, had 32 of its 87 positions

[01:06:07] unfilled. That figure is lower now, but one of the still open positions is at Colvin Run Mill, which has now only two full-time staff down from five ten years ago. Not filling these slots mean that park programming and maintenance have suffered, as well as revenue generation. The park authority requested an increase of five million dollars to maintain the same level of service as last year, but given new acquisitions and county initiatives, such as achieving zero waste. The advertised budget, however, provides less than 10% of this requested amount. To fulfill

[01:06:44] these other requirements even partially, will this mean that more slots will go empty as before? The advertised budget cuts two staff positions at a time when the parkatory is actually asking for more people. Two of those requested positions would be for mobile nature centers. Taking parks to the people is a beautiful idea, right? And the Friends of Cold and Run had talked about taking these simple machines to schools, a practice old-timers tell me was in play when the park had more staff. I suggest adding a naturalist and a historian to permanent parks and have them

[01:07:19] rotate with these mobile centers so that the parks could be taken to the people. Another three positions requested by the park authority are for people to care, professionals to care for the trees. In her book, Braiding Sweetgrass, botanist Robin Wall Kimmer explains that out how in her native Indian culture, trees are considered part of the community. They are called the standing people, and they provide invaluable ecosystem services to the entire community, such as running air and water purification 24-7. And you have acknowledged the importance of trees in the

[01:07:57] countywide energy and climate action plan by pledging to expand the tree canopy to six percent of the county area. But as Cindy pointed out, anyone that drives around can see that quite the opposite. Trees are being felled for development, and on parkland, invasive species have choked out live trees and are squeezing out native plants. The miller's house at Colvin Run is completely camouflaged by dead and dying trees overgrown with vines from Colvin Run Road itself.

[01:08:25] It would be nice to think that forests could take care of themselves, but urbanization around these wonderful, life-supporting forests means that we have to take care of them, and the park authority needs the resources to properly maintain them for the good of us all. I understand the 500,000 has been found in the third quarter review for forestry contractors, but as the gentleman who represented the workers pointed out, this one-time infusion won't take care of trees for years to come. A more thoughtful

approach would be to meet the park authority's request for three professionals. Robin Wall Kimmer suggests that trees deserve you and me speaking up on their

[01:09:05] behalf. And to quote her local councilwoman, this requires showing up at the dam meeting. Well, I'm showing up at this meeting. Just to wrap up, please fund salary increases for revenue-based staff from the general fund. Ensure that all park positions are fully funded. Ensure that tasks that are adequately funded so that resources aren't diverted from funding personnel.

[01:09:29] Authorize a naturalist and a historian for these mobile parks and authorize free merit positions to take care of the forest and that would be taking care of the parks people and the standing people the trees thank you for your kind attention thank you very much uh speaker number speaker number 16 is uh terence stroman director of community connected sites welcome floor is yours good afternoon can you hear me yes all right first and foremost i come before the board um as an advocate um for the residents of resting in particular the community connected sites that

[01:10:04] is full Fairfax County affordable housing properties, Stone Gate Apartments, Cedar Ridge Apartments, and Westglade Apartments. And this is a couple trends I've seen in my time serving here in the community for the last past 11 years that I'm starting to see trend even further, right?

[01:10:22] That I think will be worthy of an investment of. First being that our community has been one that we've taken on the policy of one Fairfax, where we're looking at it from an equitable standpoint. One that we've seen on a continuous basis is language. As we know, we have one in one of our communities.

[01:10:40] At Crescent, we have 26 languages. We see the barriers that come with when someone can't comprehend legal documents like leases, even IEPs when it comes to schools, the barriers that come with that.

[01:10:55] I think an investment in making sure that we can meet those individuals in their language, they can take home those documents and be able to comprehend them then it will take away some of the translation that comes with it because i think that sometimes we have some of the issues that come with like recertification knowing when is those leases um do when you have to turn in documents if you don't know how to read in your native language how are you out to understand when someone's translating it to you in another language esl has been one of our critical classes that offer throughout the pandemic we probably serviced over 20 individuals every wednesday

[01:11:31] online and we'd service two every tuesday and thursday in person five individuals participate so that'll be one of the investments i will urge the the board to to take heat in another one affordable homes we had the opportunity to speak with supervisor alcorn with the restaurant comprehensive plan we've also had the opportunity to take into some affordable housing meetings in January. I love the county of Fairfax County. I love the city of Reston, but I can't afford to live here as a paid professional myself. And I know my staff, my family, and the people that I serve cannot also have the economic mobility to move out of the properties that they live in now

[01:12:10] because they're being priced out. Even though rents are being higher, our supply is going lower, our demand is being greater. A lot of people would like to live in this community, but it's just not affordable. So the investment of more affordable homes, if possible, will be one that I would urge the board to looking for, just like our CEO, Ms. Kerry Wilson, I talked about. Last but not least, our investment

in two non-profits such as the one I work for now. Health and Human Services, this is my first time being in a pandemic. I'm only 42 years old. I've heard about the Spanish

[01:12:44] flu, but COVID was one that I wouldn't wish on anyone as a Health and Human Services professional, But our services and our resources were definitely greatly needed. We had an opportunity to do food distributions. We was able to help a lot of individuals and families stay off being evicted by either navigating through unemployment.

[01:13:07] We know a lot of our services was overwhelmed by individuals and by people in need. There might have been anxiety or things of that nature. But I really urge the board to continue to invest in organizations like Cornerstones, Facets, and even our Northern Legal Services.

[01:13:23] These services and resources are the thing and the beacon that continue to make residents in your community. Because I don't live here. I live in Baltimore County. But it makes this opportunity, it makes this county attractive and especially rest and attractive for the beacons to come here and for residents to stay here and be one as well.

[01:13:42] So those are three trends that I've seen as an advocate for some of my residents at Cedar Ridge, Crescent, Stonegate, and Westlake, and the greater part of Reston. So I would think you'll take heed to those and maybe make an investment. Thank you for your time.

[01:13:57] Thank you very much. And we are on speaker number 17, Michael Sopko. Is Michael here? Speaker number 17. How about speaker number 18, Edwin Lenz? Edwin?

[01:14:13] Edwin is here. And as speaker number 18, welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and board members. My name is Ed Linz. I live in Springfield, and I think I am perhaps the first person to come before you today to not ask for money.

[01:14:33] I don't want any money. I'm in a good position. I retired from the Navy and then retired from teaching Fairfax County Public Schools for over 20 years, and I got Social Security, so money's not a big problem with me. But I want you to write down one word.

[01:14:48] Debbie, D-E-B-B-I-E. My wife is in final stages of Alzheimer's, so I had to employ a lady, a home health care worker. This introduced me to an aspect of our county that I was totally unfamiliar with, and that is someone who, by necessity, lives hand to mouth. And she has a home. She's a homeowner, but it's part of her divorce settlement from the early 2000s, where

[01:15:25] her ex-husband has given her about $2,500, but that has to go to the mortgage, and she gets whatever else is left. Well, you can imagine what has happened over the years as the property taxes have been raised. What has happened is that $2,500, more and more of it is going to her mortgage, and she has less and less to actually eat with. So every time that you do what I regard as an almost impossible task, and that is to balance claims from all the people that have been talking

[01:16:04] here. I want you to keep Debbie in mind. Remember that word, because she is getting less and less and less. I found her when I hired her two years ago, living in her home where her heating system had gone out, and she was sitting in one room with a space heater, and she has a lien on her house from not paying taxes. We've got that all straightened out. But she is just symptomatic

[01:16:37] of what happens when you raise taxes. So I would ask you very carefully to remember Debbie. And I'll repeat it one more time. Debbie, thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Lenz. And our speaker

number 19 is Robert Young. Is Robert here? I've not seen him yet. Speaker number 19. How about speaker 20 tommy tippett speaker 21 probably not either katherine murray okay speaker 22 joe faye

[01:17:12] joe is here come on down joe and how about uh speaker 23 leah tenorio is okay if you could if you could come on down a little bit closer to the podium and speaker number 24 ivith perez okay excellent very good uh and we have before speaker number 22 joe faye who is executive director of Vic, welcome.

[01:17:41] Thank you all. Appreciate your time. And we've provided copies of the testimony from the group from Vic, if it's helpful. Hopefully it'll be coming around.

[01:17:58] As you said, I'm Joe Fay. I'm the executive director at Facets and the recent co-chair of Ventures Community. We're a nearly 50-year-old consortium in nonprofits and faith communities, 25 of us, working along the Route 1 corridor, advocating and working with families in need.

[01:18:14] As you know, the pandemic and associated economic upheaval has had a disproportionate impact on already vulnerable members of our community. Many families benefited from and really needed the expanded services made possible by the additional federal funding that we were all blessed with.

[01:18:36] Those services included expanded rent and utility assistance through CSP, expanded food banks and additional food distributions, the significantly expanded emergency shelter system, and emergency and supplemental SNAP benefits. We all understand that that additional federal funding is coming to an end.

[01:18:57] However, the crisis in our community is continuing. Working families in our community worry about keeping roofs over their heads, utilities turned on, and food on their tables. They're facing rapidly rising rents, rising food costs, benefit cuts, and wages that are simply not keeping up with inflation.

[01:19:17] For many in our community, the impact of the pandemic will last for years. FACET's food distributions continue to see hundreds of cars lining up for groceries along Buckman Road. On the Route 1 corridor, our market-rate affordable housing is being inflated away with rapidly rising rents, making units no longer affordable for many working families.

[01:19:39] At our Next Steps family shelter, we've been operating at 250% capacity for months. Our 17 shelter units are full, and we've been renting an additional 35 motel units each night for families that otherwise would have no other place to go.

[01:19:56] This produces a tremendous strain on staff and, of course, on budgets. We recently had to consider the abrupt closing of those overflow hotel rooms as of March 31st. We were able to avoid that thanks to the third quarter reallocation of funding, and we truly appreciate that.

[01:20:17] It would have been a devastating and abrupt cut for those families, And this gives us time to work with the families to really develop the new housing plan and move them back into homes. With the expanded federal funding ending, we urge the county to consider a ramp down of that federal funding rather than a drop in a cliff.

[01:20:44] And I know you all are working on that. But the example of what you were able to do with the motel issue and supporting the homeless services providers really matters. And we urge you to look at that ramp down on an ongoing basis.

[01:21:02] We think it probably has to be a ramp down to a level higher than pre-pandemic levels for human services. Vic believes, as I think we all do, that everyone deserves to have food on their table and a roof over their head. We're pleased that the county executive's budget sustained and even increased funding for human services programs that meet the needs of our most vulnerable neighbors.

[01:21:24] We support increases in county employee compensation and hope to see similar increases for the nonprofits who face similar recruitment and retention benefits, often with lower salaries and benefit packages. In many instances, the nonprofits provide the last mile in delivering crucial services.

[01:21:43] We applaud and really appreciate the additional $10 million to support the creation, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable housing by the use of the Pandemic Reserve Fund in the third quarter recommendation through the county executive's budget.

[01:21:59] We also believe in increasing baseline funding for affordable housing to one and a half cents of the tax rate is a crucial step that will allow for increased planning stability towards obtaining our long-term goals of affordable housing.

[01:22:15] Finally, we believe the provision of basic needs services will continue to be a crucial need in our community throughout FY 2024. We support the proposal to allocate approximately $10 million remaining of the general fund pandemic reserve towards additional human services needs that emerge over the year for things such as food access, emergency rental assistance, and homeless services.

[01:22:39] Thank you. Thank you for your time and your attention. We appreciate it. And now a few of my colleagues will come down and tell their stories. Thank you. Thank you very much, Joe. And we are on speaker number 23, Leah Tenorio. Ms. Tenorio, welcome.

[01:22:58] Thank you. My name is Leah Tenorio, Director of Hispanic Ministry and Community Outreach at Good Shepherd Catholic Church in the Mount Vernon area of Alexandria and a member of VIC. I've been in charge of the Emergency Assistance Program since May of 2020, and I'm here today to say that the level of need in our community continues to be as high or higher than during the pandemic.

[01:23:22] the economic impact of the pandemic is not over many people have not recovered the level of stability that they had pre-pandemic they're still struggling the most affected are those who work in the service industry those who work in cleaning hotels restaurant workers construction crews painting all of our low-income residents are essential workers we are receiving a higher number of calls for assistance each month almost double the number from this time last year our funds are out by the second or third day of the month. The calls continue to come in at almost the

[01:23:59] same level for the rest of the month, but these people receive only a list of other resources. Please note that these individuals have already called the county helpline at CSP and are told that they are out of funds. Many of the people who call Good Shepherd have actually been referred to us by Coordinated Services. With almost every case, I'm hearing that the reason they cannot pay the rent is because their hours have been cut back at work, they're working less days per week, also that their rent has gone up along with the cost of food and other household goods. I've been

[01:24:35] surprised to see how many of the callers have court notices, eviction notices, or unlawful detainers. I've heard people say that they were short $150 on their rent and they were issued a notice on the 6th of the month to appear in court. They're being charged additional fines, fees, and penalties all of which we end up helping to pay which takes away funds that could have helped another family with rent

i'm also getting more requests for food assistance gift cards to be used for food medicine household products other other household items actually when a family

[01:25:11] calls for rental assistance i'm telling them to budget all their funds to pay the rent first and plan to get food at the local distribution places in our community as it's easier to get food than it is to get rental assistance another important factor is health issues many families report that at least one of the members of their family suffers from some mental or physical physical or mental health issue that's directly or indirectly related to coven which prevents them from working or limits their work capacity in summary since the impact of the pandemic

[01:25:48] continues to affect people in our community we should continue to provide funding to support emergency assistance programs and other support systems that will lift up families and ensure that basic needs are met in many cases this funding will act as a preventative care for more difficult and costly issues like homelessness health issues and mental health issues that come from stress thank you thank you very much and we are on speaker number uh 24 uh yvette perez who i I understand we'll have an interpreter as well.

[01:26:27] And following Speaker number 24 will be Speaker 25, who's a call in. Is Speaker 26, Reverend Cameron Wilds here? Okay. If you could come on down. How about Speaker 27, Sue Morena? Okay. After Reverend Wilds' testimony, we're going to go back to Speakers 19, 20, and 21, who were not here when I called them.

[01:26:51] They will be following Reverend Wilds, and then we will get back on schedule. Ms. Perez, welcome.

[01:27:22] good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Yvette Perez. I live in Audubon Estates. I'm a volunteer and community ambassador with United Community and Opportunity Neighborhood. In that capacity, I work with the weekly food distribution and help connect families in need to different resources. I want to share a personal experience in addition to what I've seen in my role as community member and volunteer.

[01:28:24] de la renta. La oficina de Audubon nos llevó a corte y nos pusieron una multa de gastos de abogados de 476 dólares más 75 de ley fee. Yo empecé a llamar a servicios coordinados para que nos pudieran ayudar a pagar la renta. Me dijeron que no tenían fondos y que llamara a otras organizaciones. La mayoría me dijeron que no tenían fondos. Una agencia nos ayudó con 550 dólares, pero no fue suficiente para pagar el total de las multas y fees.

[01:28:58] Una semana después de ir a corte, encontramos la noticia de evicción en la puerta de nuestro hogar. Volví a llamar a CSP, pero otra vez me dijeron que no tenían fondos de los recursos de COVID para ayudar. Después llamé a la iglesia El Buen Pastor y por la noticia de eviction. Me pudieron ayudar y encontrar ayuda de dos otras iglesias y lograr parar la eviction.

[01:29:26] During the pandemic, my husband lost his job because the company he worked for went out of business. Since then, our economic situation has suffered and it has been difficult for us to get back to normal. He found another job, but it is not a full-time job. Also, a year ago, I had an accident and have not been able to work to contribute to our household income. Two months ago, we couldn't pay the full rent. The Audubon office took us to court and fined us $476 for attorney fees plus a $75 late fee. I started calling

coordinated services before the court gate to get help to pay the rent. They told me that they didn't have funds and referred me to

[01:30:05] other organizations. Most told me that they had no funds. One agency was able to help with $550, but it was not enough to pay the full fines and fees. A week after going to court, we found the notice of eviction on the door of our home. I called CSP again, but they again told me that they had no more funds from COVID resources to be able to help. Then I called Good Shepherd Church, and because we had an eviction notice, they were able to help me and find help from two other churches, and we managed to stop the eviction. Yo, en mi rol de voluntaria, conozco a otras familias que están en esta misma situación. Yo puedo decir que ahora yo veo más necesidad que

[01:30:43] en la pandemia. Veo el doble de número de personas haciendo línea para poder agarrar alimentos. La distribución es nosotros empezamos a distribuir la comida a las 12 y las personas empiezan a llegar a las 7 de la mañana para hacer línea. Conozco muchas familias que no pueden pagar su renta ni otros viles debido a recorte de horas en su trabajo. Otro factor es que ha subido la renta y las canasta básica en los últimos dos meses conozco a dos familias que pasaron por una situación como la mía excepto ellos fueron desalojados eran dos familias con hijos pequeños es una

[01:31:22] experiencia muy difícil y estresante que no deseo que nadie pase por esto esto afecta no sólo a los padres sino a toda la familia los hijos también están afectados emocional y psicológicamente yo Puedo decir que en mi experiencia que mis hijos sufrieron mucho y se preocuparon.

[01:31:40] Mi hija decía, mamá, nos van a sacar de la casa. ¿Dónde vamos a ir? Ella no quería ir a la escuela porque tenía miedo que cuando regresara no iba a estar su hogar. In my role as volunteer, I know other families who are in the same situation.

[01:31:58] I can say that I see more need now than during the pandemic. I see double the number of people lining up to get food. The distribution begins at 12 noon, and people begin to get in line at 7 a.m. I know many families who cannot pay their rent or other bills due to their hours being cut back at work.

[01:32:15] Another factor is that rent is going up along with the cost of living. In the last two months, I know two families who have gone through a situation like mine, except that they were evicted. Both of these families had small children. It is a very difficult and stressful experience that I do not wish on anyone to have to go through.

[01:32:34] this affects not only the parents but the whole family children are also affected emotionally and psychologically i can say from my experience that my children suffered a lot and they worried my daughter would say mom are they going to take us out of our house where will we go she didn't want to go to school because she was afraid that i wouldn't be here when she got back

[01:33:06] I plead with you to continue the fund to fund the program that will help families who need rental assistance. These families need to feel supported in this moment of despair, not to hear there are no funds, but rather, yes, we can help you. Thank you.

[01:33:28] Thank you. Thank you both very much. We have a few speakers later who will have interpreters as well and so when that happens uh we allow time for the interpretation and time for the testimony so twice as much time so just for for folks awareness uh we allow that here we are now on speaker number 25 uh brenda face on brenda here she's she's dialed in okay brenda can you hear me

[01:34:01] okay yes i can welcome the floor is yours good afternoon thank you my name is brenda fason and And I am here to testify for the continued need of funding to provide services to individuals continuing to suffer after the pandemic on the Route 1 corridor.

[01:34:25] I serve as the co-facilitator of VIX and the director of missions for Bethlehem Baptist Church, located in the Gum Springs community of South County. Reverend Dr. Darrell K. White is the pastor. Since its inception in 1863, Bethlehem has played a vital role in the development and sustainability of the Gumsprings community and other communities along the Route 1 corridor.

[01:34:50] Committed to its religious heritage, the church continues to serve as a deacon of hope, providing food and rental assistance, meeting the needs of the homeless, and providing affordable counseling services to the community. From the beginning of the pandemic, Bethlehem partnered with the Capital Area Food Bank, Saver Truck, Knights of Columbia, and Giants Food to provide food to approximately 300 families weekly experiencing food insecurity.

[01:35:20] Although the pandemic has subsided, the need for food continues to plague our community. In January 2022, with the aid of the county's food access grant, Bethlehem tailored its food distribution program specifically to meet the needs of seniors and individuals living in zip codes 22306 and 22309.

[01:35:45] Based on data found in the Fairfax County COVID Vulnerability Index, many individuals living in these zip codes experience hypertension, diabetes, and asthma. With that in mind, it was our desire to enhance our current food distribution program by intentionally offering nutritious and culturally appropriate food to our clients in the hopes that we could positively impact the health of these individuals.

[01:36:16] We intentionally sought to serve families and specifically seniors in the community who could not afford healthy foods due to limited monetary resources. Recently, we have seen an increase in the number of individuals, families, and especially seniors, requesting food assistance due to the increase in living expenses, such as cost of food, housing, gas, electricity, etc.

[01:36:45] Individuals have stated that they are forced to make a decision on whether to buy food or pay their mortgage or other household expenses. We are noticing that many of our seniors are especially suffering as they try to meet these changes on a fixed income.

[01:37:03] It is unfortunate that they have worked hard all of their lives, bought homes, and raised their children in this community. And due to unforeseen circumstances such as the pandemic, find themselves struggling to buy food. I ask that you consider the plight of these citizens as you make a decision and choose to continue funding emergency assistance programs and other such needed programs to financially lift our marginalized neighbors and especially our seniors in our community.

[01:37:38] Thank you. Thank you, Brenda. We are now on speaker number 26, Reverend Cameron Wilds. Reverend, welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Cameron Wiles. I'm going to serve as the lead pastor at Rising Hope Mission Church on the Route 1 Corridor and also a member of Ventures and Community.

[01:37:57] I rise today to first give thanks for the designation of funding that has occurred through the county during the COVID-19 pandemic in areas such as emergency support for hunger relief, rent and utility assistance, as well as housing. During a time of local, state, and national crisis, we showed glimpses of hope that our best efforts at being, quote, one Fairfax might ring to be more than a slogan, but dare I say it true.

[01:38:23] Through local, state, and federal funding alongside the work of the government, nonprofits, faith communities, and citizens of goodwill, we were able to make significant contributions with our most vulnerable communities to keep them housed, fed, and medically taken care of.

[01:38:38] I understand the need to be mindful of spending and a desire to serve with equity all of Fairfax residents, but I want to give caution in thinking that normalcy has returned, especially amongst our most vulnerable communities. The impact of COVID-19 economically, socially, and physically left its mark on everyone in one way or another.

[01:38:59] But if you were amongst those, like in my community at Rising Hope, that were already struggling to get by prior to the pandemic, these impacts have left chasms that a vaccine has not yet cured. Housing has not only become harder and more expensive to obtain, but it seems like a distant and unattainable dream when your first step to even get into emergency sheltering has you waiting for weeks on end for a bed to become available.

[01:39:27] Inflation has not only driven up the cost of goods like food, but also the cost of service for those that provide it. Rising Hope currently manages a food market, we call it a food market, a food pantry, that sees over 300 families per week. We have over 900 families that have come through our pantry in the last quarter, representing over 2,400 individuals.

[01:39:51] In a recent survey conducted, we found that over 60% of these families received over three quarters of their weekly groceries from our market. Since the SNAP benefits return to pre-pandemic levels, we have seen exponential growth in the numbers of new guests coming in each week.

[01:40:07] We also operate with New Hope Housing, Region 1's Overflow Shelter, which was consistently at full capacity this year. Furthermore, the calls for rent relief, utility services, and other emergency services have grown substantially in recent months.

[01:40:23] I rise today requesting that in your budget considerations, you hear the voices of the service providers before you today. especially those of us that serve at the margins. The epidemic of poverty is not over in the communities you have been called to serve. People are hurting.

[01:40:40] The ability to find stable footing is getting harder and the workload is getting more. This might not be everyone's story in the districts that you serve, but it is your neighbor's story. It's the one Fairfax story. Thank you for your time.

[01:40:55] Thank you very much, Revan. We are gonna go back to speakers 19, 20, and 21. Robert Young, Tommy Tippett, and Catherine Murray, who I know are here. If you could come on down. And after these three speakers, we will return back to speaker number 27. Mr. Young, welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you, and I appreciate you circling back around to pick us

[01:41:33] up. We thought a little later in the program, but we appreciate it nonetheless. Tommy Tippett and Catherine Murray are going to yield their time to me as I'm representing the firefighters here Fairfax County. So good evening, Chairman McKay, members of the board, County Executive Hill. My name is Robert Young. I'm a lieutenant with the Fairfax County Fire Rescue Department, and I've served the Fairfax community for almost 20 years. I'm speaking today as the president of Fairfax County Professional Firefighters and Paramedics, IAFF Local 2068. It is my honor to represent over

[01:42:10] 1,500 of my brothers and sisters that serve the Fairfax community as firefighters, fire marshals, apparatus mechanics, EMTs, and public safety communicators. Thanks to the progressive action of this board, we recently won at Landslide the right to negotiate a contract with the county, making us the first bargaining unit to negotiate here in Fairfax County in over four decades.

[01:42:38] But it was not in time for this budget cycle. So here we are, one more year, doing what we have come to know as collective begging. So that's my joke. That's the last one, I promise you. This year, our asks are simple.

[01:42:55] We need the county to allocate an additional $2.1 million of this year's budget to fund previous promises made to our frontline employees. By doing this, we can begin to restore the service levels to which protected Fairfax families and businesses before the pandemic.

[01:43:12] And make good on promises made to your dedicated employees that have only been partially fulfilled despite years of frontline pandemic service at risk of not just ourselves, but our families. And number two, fix the flaws in the formulas and processes that have led us to these issues, namely using outdated and incorrect data and methodologies to compare us to our surrounding jurisdictions.

[01:43:37] Throughout my time in the department, I've seen our steps frozen, MRAs unfunded or simply not funded at all. Promotional opportunities taken away like BLS Tech, Master Tech, EMS Lieutenant, Captain 2.

[01:43:55] Four stations have been open in that time, increasing minimum staffing, at the same time reducing our efforts to recruit and hire at a rate to keep up with attrition. There's been little increase in the amount of leave slots available to our members each day. There's also been the creation of a crude on-call policy forcing our members to work even longer hours or not be able to live free from fear of having to come back to duty if you're able to go home at all.

[01:44:23] Apparatus mechanics have been here, in some cases, 20 years, but are still in the middle of their pay scales. And that only happens because we left the mechanics out of previous pay increases. And even this year, the county has the ability to expand the signing bonus program for our department because we are struggling as well to staff our units and to bring paramedics to Fairfax County.

[01:44:47] In recent years, the frontline members of our department have endured working upwards of 80 hours per week, sacrificing time, energy, money, continuing to serve the Fairfax community at the cost of physical, mental, and emotional health of our members and their families.

[01:45:04] For some background, in the fire department, working mandatory shifts takes place because we are required to have enough staff to safely provide adequate emergency response to the Fairfax community. On a normal workday, our department members' shifts begin to 7 a.m., and it lasts until 7 a.m. the next day, doing a full 24-hour shift.

[01:45:25] And because most cannot afford to live in the community they serve, their days begin at 4 a.m. or earlier. We traditionally arrive well ahead of our start time, so the off-going shift has a lower risk of getting called out for an emergency that would cause the county more money in the way of overtime.

[01:45:46] So when we do not have enough staffing to ensure we can keep all essential apparatus like ambulances, fire engines operating, our members are required to stay at work for up to a maximum of 12 additional hours or come back 12 hours ahead of their next shift.

[01:46:03] This has an immense impact on our members, their quality of life and their work-life balance. They miss out on time with their families. They miss doctor's appointments, birthdays, school plays, and the list goes on. In 2021, our members worked over 80,000 hours in mandatory overtime.

[01:46:23] 80,000 hours. So with nine calendar work years of involuntary overtime that our members perform. 80,000 hours. That's more than 3,333 24-hour shifts. Recruitment and retention, they go hand in hand.

[01:46:42] We will never be able to catch up or keep up if we continue losing members at a faster or equal rate as we are hiring and training them. Not only is this a disservice to our members, it's a disservice to the taxpayers of Fairfax County. By relying so heavily on mandatory overtime, our personnel costs is significantly higher than what it should be.

[01:47:03] Just think about it. For each of those 80,000 hours of mandatory overtime that our members performed, the county paid them at their overtime rate. We cannot continue to fund overtime. We need to fund positions and attract the best and brightest available that would significantly be less expensive.

[01:47:23] If the county just hired a sufficient number of employees and paid them at their regular pay rate, it is not just immoral to prevent our first responders from being able to spend time with their families. It's fiscally irresponsible.

[01:47:39] It's not a sustainable formula for our department. Once considered the best in the nation, we are now in the race to the bottom. We cannot afford to let being good stand in the way of being great again. But to ensure the retention of our members, we need to ensure that we as a county fulfill the promises and initiatives made in previous budgets that have fallen by the wayside.

[01:48:04] Trust between employees and employer goes both ways. When the public calls 911, they trust that we will do everything we can to arrive and provide care in a quick and efficient and safe manner. Our employees need to have the trust in you and the trust in that trust can be can't be built if the relationship is built on unfulfilled or broken promises.

[01:48:26] Prior to the pandemic, the county put forward an initiative that would have regraded firefighters, lieutenants, master techs. These regrades were promised as a way to make our compensation more competitive in a region and fix compression in our pay scale. Here we are four years later, and we still have not received these regrades.

[01:48:47] By allocating $2.1 million, the county could begin fulfilling these promises, helping to restore your employees' trust and your leadership. An issue we need to address so we can fix the problems I listed earlier is to correct how we choose to compare ourselves to our neighboring jurisdictions.

[01:49:04] For example, when you compare our wages to the wages of our brothers and sisters throughout the region for the same reason, to compare Fairfax County to, I'm sorry, when you compare us, you compare Fairfax County lieutenants to D.C. sergeants. Those are not the same rank.

[01:49:21] D.C. has lieutenants. They do the same job as lieutenants in Fairfax County. It's a simple fix. Just compare our lieutenants to their lieutenants. Another example, Alexandria has firefighters one, two, three, and four, while Fairfax County has but one firefighter rank.

[01:49:37] So when you compare our firefighters to the firefighters in Alexandria, you should compare the firefighters to do the same job, not their entry-level firefighters. But when Fairfax County compares, I'm

sorry, historically, we have also always used comparative data from neighboring jurisdictions previous fiscal year, even when we know their pay ranges, what they will be for the upcoming fiscal year.

[01:50:03] This leads to us never catching up to the true median of the region. We can never hit a moving target if we don't consider how much the target is moving. For example, Alexandria, Arlington, Washington, D.C., Montgomery County, Prince George's County, all have published their pay raises for fiscal year 24, but Fairfax County is still using the pay rates for these jurisdictions from the beginning of fiscal year 23, even though some had mid-year increases, and we use those old numbers when deciding our pay for this coming fiscal year.

[01:50:37] Conclusions drawn from inaccurate data will always lead to inaccurate conclusions. Until we correct how we compare to others, we will never be able to address these issues. The county budget process is about making decisions based on the priorities and the morals of our community.

[01:50:54] Each budget year that the county decides not to fully staff our department, they're making a conscious choice to keep our members away from their families, friends, and loved ones. But each year, the county decides not to act on these issues with methodology.

[01:51:10] Each time you pass a budget, every time you don't allocate funds, you choose not to fix this. The members I represent take pride in protecting the most vulnerable community members, but our current model systemically diminishes the protection they receive when they are the most vulnerable.

[01:51:29] Without your action, these problems will only worsen. Your competition is not standing still. Two of our closest neighbors, Arlington and Alexandria, recently put forward agreements that help make them more competitive regarding the pay, benefits, and working conditions of first responders.

[01:51:47] But you can help fix this. By allocating $2.1 million of your budget, we can get on track. Thank you for your time and attention. Congratulations to Supervisors Faust and Gross on your upcoming retirements, and good luck to you all.

[01:52:02] Thank you. Thank you very much, Bobby. And thank you to all of you who also were here to support that testimony. We appreciate it. And with that, we are going to go to Speaker 27, Sue Morena.

[01:52:18] Is Sue here? She is. Okay. And Speaker number 28, Linda Sullivan. Speaker number 29, Jesse Benitez. And Speaker 30, Hannah Jew. If you are speakers, any of those speakers, if you could come down closer to the podium so that when it's your time to testify, we are ready to hear you.

[01:52:42] Welcome, Sue. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and board members. I am Sue Marina, president of ACCA, Annandale Christian Community for Action. Now in its 55th year of partnership with the county, providing a wide range of services for our neighbors in need in the Annandale, Laconia, Bailey's Crossroads, and the Colmore areas of Fairfax County.

[01:53:07] The services ACCA provides are divided into two major categories. One is the Childhood Development Center, our CDC, and the other is our Human Service Ministry, HSM. I will be speaking about HSM. First of all, I would like to thank you for your support of ACCA in the past and look forward to your continued partnership with ACCA in the future.

[01:53:28] The HSM programs include our family emergency assistance, emergency food and hygiene products, pickup and delivery of furniture for needy families, and transportation to medical appointments. Other initiatives that ACA supports are Rebuilding Together, which is the Housing

Rehabilitation Program, the Annandale Crop Hunger Walk, Meals on Wheels, Scholarships for Students with Disabilities, the Homework Club, and Just Neighbors.

[01:53:59] We need the county's continued support in this fiscal year's budget and future ones as well. The need for our assistance is not going away, and it is increasing daily. For instance, Family Emergency Assistance provided $6.65 million in assistance for rent, utility bills, prescriptions, and other needs during the past two and a half years, in addition to its normal budget, which is $300,000, and it's all done with volunteer support.

[01:54:28] For 2022, FEA accounted for 40% of our operating budget, providing $3.3 million in assistance to 348 households, which included 989 individuals. The need continues, and during the first four months of 2023, the demand for our services outpaced our budget, and we were forced to go back to pre-pandemic funding levels.

[01:54:52] Our ACCA Food Pantry volunteers deliver nutritious food and other essentials for healthy living to needy families and individuals in our community. Many of these neighbors do not have transportation to visit a food pantry. ACCA volunteers receive information from the CSP staff and then make the deliveries.

[01:55:10] In 2022, the food pantry assisted 2,802 individuals and 941 families. This was a higher level than what we had seen in 2019. In the month of February this year, we collected over 2,800 pounds of food. All of it was gone within a month.

[01:55:27] With the decrease in SNAP benefits, we continue to see a greater demand for this vitally important service. Last year, our furniture teams delivered 505 items to 195 persons and 61 needy households. We accomplished this by 75 volunteers who worked on 10 different teams.

[01:55:50] ACK continues to participate in Fairfax County initiatives such as prevention of hypothermia, ending homelessness, and encouraging interfaith dialogue. I would like to close by saying the need for assistance in our county has always been there. The need now continues despite the ending of the pandemic.

[01:56:07] Our volunteers will continue helping as many of our neighbors in need as possible. We ask the county for its continued support in this fiscal year's budget and future ones to make our programs possible. Lastly, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Vice Chairman Penny Gross and her administration for her contribution in tireless efforts advocating for the needs of the most vulnerable in our community. She will sorely be missed. With your continued support and our incredible volunteers, ACCA will be able to continue its critical mission. We appreciate

[01:56:43] your consideration and all the work you do for the county. Thank you. Thank you, Sue. And we are on speaker number 28. Speaker number 28 is Linda Sullivan, president and CEO of Arts Fairfax, and has five minutes to testify. Welcome. Thank you, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors and County Executive Hill. We really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. Local arts agencies throughout the country play an important role in providing essential

[01:57:18] services that support and strengthen the arts, create new opportunities, and boost economic activity. As Fairfax County's local arts agency, Arts Fairfax is vital to the creative community, some of whom have come out in support today.

[01:57:36] Thank you. We distribute county funds to the arts, connect artists and arts organizations to each other and to other sectors, and promote cultural activities for county residents. The past few years have presented unusual challenges for all of us.

[01:57:56] As an arts service organization, we directed all of our resources toward preserving the county's arts sector, including raising public and private funds, sharing pandemic information, meeting professional development needs, and increasing communications.

[01:58:12] We know from our grantees that our expanded efforts have been key to their survival, and we thank the county very much for its increased support to arts grants this year. Arts Fairfax has successfully created new ways to sustain the arts through collaborative efforts with the county, other civic agencies, and the private sector.

[01:58:43] For example, our new ticket subsidy grants are reaching low-income audiences through partnerships with Neighborhood and Community Services, Fairfax County Public Schools, and the county's Department of Transportation is providing ridership assistance.

[01:58:59] We are bringing poetry to local parks in collaboration with the Park Authority and the Fairfax Poet Laureate. We are helping local talent to access the county's newest performing arts venue, Capital One Hall.

[01:59:15] Some exciting examples of arts collaborations include a dance company that worked with visual artists to create a living sculpture performance and an orchestra that collaborated with a theater group for a performance of live music and improv.

[01:59:33] Our increased communications efforts have yielded significantly higher visibility and engagement. We have tripled our pre-pandemic media coverage and quadrupled our professional workshop attendance. We have successfully attracted diverse organizations as first-time grant applicants by engaging outreach such as translating our grants communications in four languages.

[02:00:00] Rising to the challenge of the past few years has come at a cost. Arts Fairfax respectfully asks that you consider a supplement of $200,000 to the FY24 advertised budget to support our operating costs and our mission efforts.

[02:00:18] In February 2020, the county's advertised budget for FY21 included a $470,000 increase for both arts grants and our operating support. As you know, a few weeks later, everything changed. Last year at this time, the Board of Supervisors approved an additional 250 for continued pandemic relief grants to the arts.

[02:00:41] The impact of this funding has been successful by all intended measures, prioritizing those who had not received pandemic relief, attracting first-time applicants, and engaging organizations that reach geographically underserved and historically marginalized populations.

[02:01:00] You will hear from a couple of these organizations shortly. It took increased staff and related costs to meet the growing service demands. County support of our operations has remained flat since FY20. We have been assisted in recent years with federal and state pandemic relief grants.

[02:01:22] Now those resources are drying up, no longer available, and we are facing a significant operating deficit. Arts Fairfax requests the additional $200,000 in county support so that we can continue to meet the cost of these expanded services for the arts sector, for the county, and for the community.

[02:01:47] Thank you so much for your consideration. Thank you very much, Linda. And we are on speaker number 29, Jesse Benitez.

[02:02:03] Welcome. Thank you, Chairman McKay, and thank you, Board of Supervisors, for allowing us to speak today. For those of you I haven't met, my name is Jesse Benitez, and I'm the general manager at Tyson's Corner Center. As many of you know, Tyson's is a premier shopping destination, not just in northern Virginia, but the greater D.C. metro area.

[02:02:22] We have a real desire to fulfill the need for arts at our centers, and frankly, we could be doing a better job. So we had really a connection and an outreach to try to get local artists, artist groups, art organizations that could represent the talent that we have here in Fairfax.

[02:02:38] We quickly realized that we are a real estate company and not an art organization. Luckily, Arts Fairfax came to our rescue. They put a call out to artists. They vetted their eligibility. And they continue to be a liaison for us, for artists to come down to the shopping center and to showcase the talent that is right here in our local community.

[02:02:57] And without them, we would truly be lost. If you ask me to backfill 40,000 square feet of retail, no problem. I'll give you a plan, a strategy, and a team to execute at the highest level. If you ask me to put on an art exhibit and a curated experience, I will break out in hives. So it's thanks to them that this has really been made possible, and we are already seeing the fruits of that labor.

[02:03:18] We had our first inaugural art exhibit with a group called the Art Lords. They put over 30 pieces of art on a custom-built wall outside of the Macy's exhibit, and truly an incredible story. Each one of these pieces told a story of Afghan culture and a vision of happiness and peace that they see.

[02:03:37] And what makes this story truly incredible is all these pieces were rescued from Afghanistan when the Taliban took over in 2021. We have our second exhibit that was installed on March 24th. This is more of a visual and physically interactive exhibit. It's by a sculptor by the name of J.P. Moeller.

[02:03:54] He's Swiss trained and Fairfax local, so what's not to love there? But that's currently on display right now. We're going to be doing a grand opening event on April 10th. And our goal is to have five of these activations throughout the year of 2023. And we want to continue that relationship. We want to continue that partnership and continue to showcase all of these great artists.

[02:04:13] We have not only a platform, but a responsibility to do that. With over 20 million visitors coming through our center each year, what greater way to give these artists a space where they can show everybody coming to our great center what diversity, what culture, and truly what quality we have right here in Fairfax.

[02:04:32] And so I stand before you today just to express my support for Arts Fairfax. And, you know, it's stores that make Tyson's a shopping center, but it's the arts that make it a community. So thank you. Thank you very much, Jesse. Thank you very much, Jesse.

[02:04:53] And we are on speaker number 30, Hannah Ju, who is founder of Community Art for Everyone. Welcome. Hello. First, I would like to thank the chairman and board of supervisors for ongoing support of the art.

[02:05:12] My name is Hannah Zhu, and I am the president of Community Art for Everyone, CAFE, a 501c3 non-profit organization based in Fairfax, Virginia. CAFE was established in 2019 with a mission of

making our local cities safer and more beautiful through community art activities.

[02:05:37] We aim to use art, education, and social movements to engage with our community meaningfully. Our focus is to serve low-resourced areas in the neighborhood, which are vulnerable to crimes and in need of cultural and artistic support to improve the residents' quality of life.

[02:06:00] Our partnership with Arts Fairfax began in 2019 for Rising Moon, which included a performance by 10 dancers from South Korea and a community dance event in Annandale with local residents at the Taste of Annandale Festival.

[02:06:18] The main fund of this project was from Korea, but it was not enough to proceed with the actual project because of unexpected exchange rate fluctuation. Fortunately, we received an Art Fairfax grant and successfully completed the project.

[02:06:38] During the pandemic, cafe artists studied how murals can help prevent crime. We received another Art Fairfax grant, but finding a wall to paint the mural was a big challenge. Thankfully, Art Fairfax introduced us to Evan Kaufman, the director of the Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation, SFDC, who was looking for an artist team that could make a mural for Mount Vernon District.

[02:07:10] With a partnership with SFDC, we completed a 50-foot long and 25-foot high mural in April 2022. This year, with a pandemic recovery grant, CAFE will have a huge community painting event created with local residents and exhibited in Fairfax County.

[02:07:33] Last year, we did a similar project and the finished artwork was exhibited at Frying Pan Farm Park in Herndon, Virginia. These are just some examples of events and programs made possible with the support of Arts Fairfax.

[02:07:50] We are incredibly grateful for Art Fairfax's support. Thank you so much. Thank you very much, Anna. Speaker number 31 is Anne Sika. Is Anne here? Speaker number 31, Anne Sika.

[02:08:09] Speaker number 31 is here. How about speaker number 32, Osmond Kivrock? Okay, I can tell he's here. Welcome, Anne. Thank you. I'm Chairman McKay and members of the board.

[02:08:26] On behalf of the Virginia Chamber Orchestra Board of Trustees, I would like to express our appreciation for your past funding for Arts Fairfax and to convey our support for their current budget request. In addition to providing essential operating support grants, Arts Fairfax is creating new ways to assist organizations in benefiting Fairfax County.

[02:08:52] Just a few weeks ago, the Virginia Chamber Orchestra received a new ticket subsidy grant. It's designed to offset the cost of free or reduced price tickets that arts organizations donate to underserved or underrepresented people. The VCO had been regularly providing complimentary tickets for recovering soldiers at Fort Belvoir as part of our outreach, but the new Arts Fairfax grant subsidizes the cost of those tickets.

[02:09:21] This is very helpful as our financial challenges are constant. In conjunction with this new grant, Arts Fairfax has arranged for free transportation. So 34 grateful people were able to board a bus at Fort Belvoir and attend our most recent concert.

[02:09:40] Arts Fairfax has played a major role in the arrival of the new Capital One Hall. To carry out our mission to serve the broadest possible audience, our board had been hoping for many years to move our performance base to the Tysons area, where the population is predicted to double by 2050.

[02:09:59] However, our strategic plan required a concert hall in Tarsens with a stage large enough for an orchestra. With the new Capital One Hall, the county has ensured the opportunity of much-needed performing venues, and Arts Fairfax continues to advise us and support us in reaching our goal of new and larger audiences.

[02:10:23] Post-pandemic attendance at classical music concerts is reported to be down by 30% nationwide. However, as we had hoped and envisioned, our audiences have been larger than they have ever been.

[02:10:41] We presented the 50th anniversary gala dinner and concert at the venue, as well as two side-by-side concerts with 75 musicians from the William and Mary Symphony part of our educational outreach to musicians at the college level. These students share a stand, rehearse, and perform in a public concert side by side with the VCO's professional players. Every organization that has appeared at Capital One is going to have different stories to share with you, but now it's my pleasure to introduce some live music. We have Osman Kivrak, the principal

[02:11:20] violist of the Virginia Chamber Orchestra, who also is a founding member of the Sunrise String Quartet. Outstanding. Thank you. Thank you. Welcome, Elizabeth. It's a great honor for me to be in

[02:11:52] front of you to be performing a piece, and the piece that I'll perform today is by one of the greatest composers of classical music, Johann Sebastian Bach. So I'll play Sarabande from the

[02:12:09] suite number one in G major. Thank you very much, Oseman. We always have our favorite testimony of

[02:15:56] the year and you're officially in the running. So thank you for that outstanding performance. We appreciate that. And that will bring us to speaker number 33, Catherine Cole. Is Catherine here? katherine is speaker number 34 farbors fatima is oh he's on the phone okay and how about speaker 35 jill norcross jill here okay katherine welcome the floor is yours thank you that's a hard act to follow i'm a little intimidated okay so chairman mckay members of the board of supervisor

[02:16:35] county executive hill and county staff members my name is kathy cole and i am speaking to you today as Chair of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging. I address you on behalf of my colleagues, the representatives of Fairfax County, and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church.

[02:16:53] The Commission on Aging is the advisory council to the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, as well as a sounding board and advocate for the needs of older adults in the Fairfax area. On behalf of the COA, I am commenting on the proposed county budget for fiscal year 2024.

[02:17:10] I thank you for the many years of support services that serve older adults and family caregivers. The Commission is pleased to see that the advertised budget contains no cuts that would adversely affect older adults. Thank you to County Executive Brian Hill. During your budget deliberations, I ask you to keep in mind that the percentage of residents aged 65 and older in Fairfax County is anticipated to increase from 13.4% in 2019 to 17.7% in 2035. As this segment of our county's population increases in numbers,

[02:17:49] concerns about the quality of life for older adults comes to the forefront. If we are serious about shaping the county to keep our older adults here during retirement, where they provide benefits to

the county, I mean, whoops, they're gone, but I was going to say, check out the gray heads in the audience, they provide a huge volunteer base, contribute to the local economy, and pay taxes.

[02:18:13] We must recognize that these needs are really similar to those of the entire population. If I can coin a phrase, these are basic raw needs, respect, access, and well-being. I attended a school meeting and was challenged by a neighbor asking why I was there when my children had grown out of the school system. The thing is I still care. I recognize that taking care of the youth of our county shapes the quality of life for all in our county. We must also care about those who are aging in our community whether or not we are at that point in life. For example, we provide buses

[02:18:50] for children to get to school regardless of their parents' ability to drive them. We recognize that a certain distance from the school is too far for them to walk or that there are streets and intersections that are too dangerous for them to navigate we place a value on getting those children to school now looking through a more holistic lens there are older adults who live too far from grocery stores or have to i'm sorry look too far from grocery stores or libraries to walk there or there are streets or intersections that are too dangerous to navigate on foot

[02:19:26] i submit that it is just as necessary to get groceries as it is to get to school i'm not advocating for universal bus service maybe not yet but i'm making a point that we all have similar needs regardless of age you've heard many eloquent speakers with pleas for funding pointing many pointing out the needs of older adults which are similar to the other aspects of their population that they serve you as responsible stewards of our county resources have a daunting task your decisions shape the future of everyone we recognize that we must take care of the most vulnerable in

[02:20:03] our community regardless of where that vulnerability stems from we also ask that in your budget deliberations the equity lens consider the reality that the quality of older of life of older adults will also add to the quality of life for all the commission thanks supervisor harry and supervisor walkenshaw and all the members of the board for their support on the older adults committee and we look forward to working in partnership with you and the community in the development

[02:20:34] shape the future of aging plan. Thank you. That brings us to Speaker 34, who is on the line, Farbors Fatima. Can you hear me okay? Yes, I can. Can you hear me, Mr. Chairman?

[02:20:52] We can hear you fine. Welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, distinguished Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the board. From press reports, the governor is sitting on more than $3.5 billion surplus and Fairfax County somewhere in the vicinity of $3 billion. The governor is hellbent on using the surplus to reward his corporate pals with a tax break and nothing for ordinary senior citizens like myself. That is why I come before you once again to advocate for seniors in the same predicament as I, badly in need of property tax

[02:21:30] relief. My name is Fariborz Fatemi. I'm an almost 30-year resident of Drainsville in Fairfax County, over 65 years old, now retired, and on fixed income. In the last three years, my land tax assessment has increased by 15% each year, taxes that are rising to the level of confiscation.

[02:21:52] When I appealed my assessment, the tax assessor told me, and I quote, the subject neighborhood is heavily sought after market area, which has become very popular with the high-end builders and individuals who purchase older properties to have them demolished and replaced by bigger homes, unquote. Having made a good decision almost 30 years ago to purchase my property should not be

a reason to be penalized year after year. I have not found oil or gold on my land. My wife and I plan to stay in our home for as long as we have together. My Supervisor

[02:22:29] John Faust and Supervisor Penny Gross and you, Mr. Chairman, and Supervisor James Wilkinshaw have heard about this confiscatory problem from me on many occasions, and I deeply appreciate your attention and attempts to find a resolution. The recent changes to update property tax relief for seniors, unfortunately, do not go far enough and do nothing to help situations like mine, and I know many other seniors suffering from the same problem. With all due respect, appealing to the tax assessor and appealing to the Board of Equalizer is an experience I would not wish on

[02:23:06] anyone because they're not helpful at all. The Equalization Board seems to be more influenced by developers and the tax assessor's office, and according to most, not an honest broker for the citizen taxpayer who appears before it. As you probably know across the nation, many states and localities have exemptions for seniors. For example, some are homestead exemptions. Some cap real estate taxes at 3%. Many states have programs that allow counties to freeze property taxes for seniors. And 10 states limit how much property tax values can increase. The aforementioned are

[02:23:44] just some ideas that, if acted upon in any shape or form, would assist many seniors with their property tax problems so that we as seniors can continue to stay in our homes. Thank you for your attention, and stay safe. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Jill Norcross, and Jill is Executive Director of Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance. Welcome. Thank you, Chairman.

[02:24:09] Thank you, Board of Supervisors and County staff. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight in support of an increase in funding for affordable housing, primarily as a representative of a regional organization who's working to meet the diverse housing needs of Northern Virginia residents. I'm also a member of the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and a Fairfax County resident in Ruston. I don't have music for you. I have a lot of data, but my gift will be, hopefully, I'll shave a minute off my comments so we can all get out of here and go outside. It's beautiful. I'm very impressed by all of the citizens who come today and a day like today to kind of advocate for their own causes so first i'd like

[02:24:47] to acknowledge the progress made on many efforts to increase the production and preservation of affordable housing in our community we really commend the county on doubling the housing production goal to a 10 000 new affordable units by 2034 we appreciate the adoption by the board of supervisors of the affordable housing preservation comp plan amendment which is aimed at maintaining the affordability of our existing multifamily housing stock and your continued work on preservation policies for the manufactured housing stock in addition to committing to no net loss of the committed affordable housing.

[02:25:21] We recognize committed funding of sufficient staffing resources for DHCD as well as many nonprofit partners which are critical to achieving our shared goals around housing, production, and keeping residents equitably and stably housed. In addition, thanks for taking the three specific recent actions to demonstrate your commitment to achieving our 10,000 new units, the $14 million for Residence 2 at Government Center, $13 million allocation for the Somos Project in Tyson's, and the $3 million tax-exempt bond authorization for the Ovation at Arrowbrook project.

[02:25:54] We continue to appreciate the one-time funding to fill the gaps, the $45 million of ARPA funding allocated to affordable housing initiatives, the proposed $10 million as part of the fiscal year 23

third quarter review, and the county's continued ability to identify similar resources for affordable housing in the future through carryover and quarterly reviews.

[02:26:15] It is crucial we prioritize affordable housing as the funds become available. However, despite our well-documented need for affordable housing, our policies to address inequities in the housing delivery system, and our well-articulated and agreed-upon goals, the county can do more to adequately address the significant funding needs in order to make this an important investment in our communities.

[02:26:35] Pre-COVID, Fairfax County had a stated need for increased baseline funding as supported in the 2018 Community-wide Housing Strategic Plan and through the 2019 Affordable Housing Resource Panel recommendations. In the county's budget guidance for fiscal years 23 and 24, the board made a commitment to build baseline county funds over the next few years to reach a total investment of two pennies on the real estate tax for the preservation of existing and the development of new affordable units.

[02:27:04] As we continue to move toward that goal, we recognize that the time is overdue to step up the commitment to ask for a significant increase in the real estate tax baseline funding beyond the one cent previously committed. We understand there's competing investment priorities for the $90 million balance included in the fiscal year 24 advertised budget.

[02:27:22] However, an additional half a cent would use only $16 million of this available balance, and the full penny would use $32 million of an available balance, moving us near to that $60 million annual contribution we stated we needed. even prior to COVID. Finally, we'd like to recognize the need to provide operating dollars for crucial supportive services, especially as we work to truly address homelessness in Fairfax with funding and policy. Without these services needed in best practice permanent supportive housing, we will not be able to properly address and house the most vulnerable in our communities. Please consider that increased funding for affordable housing is truly an

[02:27:57] investment that we need to ensure that Fairfax County retains our economic advantage of being a strong and thriving business community, as well as ensure that Fairfax County retains our commitment to addressing all the disparities in our resident outcomes under the One Fairfax Initiative. Affordable housing supports both goals.

[02:28:15] Having a healthy, sustainable, and equitable Fairfax County is good for all of the residents and for our collective future success. Thank you for this opportunity to speak tonight. Thank you very much, Jill. And our next speaker is Speaker 36, Mary Payden. Did you want to go ahead with your testimony?

[02:28:33] I know we're waiting on a few other folks to arrive. Excellent. Excellent. So this is Speaker 36, Mary Payton, Chair of the South County Task Force for Human Services, and has five minutes. Welcome. Trusting electronics today, so let's do it.

[02:29:04] Okay, so good evening, Supervisors. I'm Mary Payton, Chair of the South County Task Force, founded in 1975 to advocate for low-income residents of Route 1. And the Fairfax NACP housing committee has organized a block of speakers, excellent speakers, on four areas of affordable housing.

[02:29:23] And I'm just going to present an overview. We have four topics. Topic one is displacement. The county is building more affordable housing. We're happy of that. But we fear it's losing housing out the back door as residents' rents increase and older garden apartments are scheduled for redevelopment.

[02:29:43] displacing many tenants, and not all of whom are covered by the new no-net-loss policy. Mobile home park communities along Route 1 are being brought in, bought, by out-of-state equity firms. And one park located in the future BRT area is ripe for sale to a developer.

[02:30:02] These parks are long-standing communities of color who want to remain together. Their only hope is for the county to partner with a nonprofit to acquire the parks and run them for the good of the residents. In its budget guidance, the board promised $60 million in the FY24 budget for both building and preserving affordable housing, but only about $30 million is actually included.

[02:30:27] So we repeat our ask for $60 million total in FY24 housing trust fund, $30 for new housing, and $30 for preservation. It's imperative to increase funding now because after a lull, development pressures are picking up, And we need to be nimble in grabbing opportunities for preservation, or they could be lost forever.

[02:30:51] Our mobile home speakers weren't able to shift their schedule when the schedule was raised up, so they're going to be here after work. They'll be here about 6, and they'll tell you about the mobile home situation. Topic 2 is fair housing.

[02:31:07] The massive COG report on fair housing found that even as Fairfax County is becoming more diverse, It's also getting more segregated. People of color mostly live in segregated, low-income areas. Today, we're going to highlight the issue of enabling lower-income minority residents to own a home to build intergenerational wealth.

[02:31:30] And this is so hard for two reasons. One is the lack of lower-priced homes in Fairfax County, and the other is the possibility of discrimination in mortgage lending, which is a nationwide problem, but we've found indications of it here. So we need to enlarge the supply of affordable for sale homes and conduct further mortgage discrimination testing, followed up by enforcement.

[02:31:56] Topic three is tenants' rights. During the pandemic, the county helped many tenants avoid eviction by providing access to legal assistance and rent relief funds. Although the pandemic is officially over, low-income communities are not back to normal.

[02:32:11] They face inflation and rent increases, yet last month, there was a sharp drop in federal food and rental assistance. Since January, there's been a big increase in the number of letters sent to tenants inviting them to appear in eviction court, and a recent study found a correlation between the number of such letters and the number of homeless people.

[02:32:35] The more letters, the more people evicted, the more people homeless. We're grateful for the addition of a legal aid attorney in eviction court and some carryover funding for rent relief, but it may not be enough. We support the right to counsel in eviction court, and we encourage you to pay close attention to the needs on the ground and act before the situation becomes desperate.

[02:32:59] Topic 4: Homelessness. Last April, about 1,500 people were turned out of hypothermia shelters. They got tents and sleeping bags and went to live in the woods or elsewhere. A county task force on how to protect unsheltered people from the health effects of rising temperatures and frequent storms was told that no additional funds were needed for the program.

[02:33:22] So we ask you to closely monitor the summer plan, conduct an evaluation in September, and continue developing a more robust program. Also, our Beacon Hill shelter, a replacement for the old

Kennedy shelter, has finally made it to the drawing board, but it's still four years from completion.

[02:33:40] And meanwhile, the 100-plus-old Kennedy Shelter is well past being fit for service. So it's imperative this year to fund some repairs to the Kennedy Shelter, to its HVAC system, and to really get rid of that stinking cesspool in the sub-basement, or to find some interim areas that can be used for shelter.

[02:34:01] And I invite you to visit the Kennedy Center and take a whiff. The ultimate solution to homelessness, of course, is affordable housing, mainly permanent supportive housing. Thank you for listening. I invite you to listen to our other speakers, many of whom are much better than me, and they'll go into more detail in each area.

[02:34:20] Thank you. Thank you, Mary. And with that, we are going to, at the moment, skip over speakers 37 through 39 who have not yet arrived. Speaker 40, Eugene Buck. Is Eugene Buck here? If you could come on down.

[02:34:36] Speaker 41, Cookie Heimer Blitz. Speaker 42, Arona Kessler, and Speaker 43, Jerry Poggi. If you could make your way down a little bit closer to the podium, that would be appreciated. And we are on Speaker 40.

[02:34:53] Welcome. Good evening, Supervisors. My name is Neera Dada, and I'm going to be delivering Eugene Buck's comments because he had to not attend because of a family emergency. Okay. Can you repeat your name again? Neera Dada. Excellent. Thank you very much.

[02:35:09] So I reside on Stuart Mill Road in Oakton, Virginia, and that's in the Hunter Mill District. I'm a member of the Subcommittee of Fair Housing of the NAACP Housing Committee. For several years, my subcommittee has followed the county responses to the 2017 Analysis of Impediments for Fair Housing Report, as well as the creation of new goals and strategies for fair housing by eight jurisdictions in Metro D.C., overseen by the Council of Governments, the COG.

[02:35:37] The new goals broaden the scope of fair housing from complaints and investigations of discrimination to include increasing the amount of affordable housing through the building and preserving it and through planning and zoning changes to allow it to be built, as well as the need for affordable housing to be near essential services such as public transportation, education and job opportunities.

[02:36:00] Our Housing Committee recently filed extensive comments with the COG on their report and you will receive copies. We hope to work with you to develop a set of measurable actions under the COG goals and strategies that can be evaluated annually. Today I will address only one goal with two proposed solutions, both of which need county funding. The goal is to increase the rate of home ownership by people of color, especially black people who face generations of housing discrimination and being pushed off their own land here in northern Virginia.

[02:36:33] As documented in the recent report, Deeply Rooted. Currently in Fairfax County, minority home ownership is stifled by a shortage of affordable homes, including townhomes and condos for sale, and a continuing discrimination in mortgage lending.

[02:36:51] For example, a recent search of Zillow on 4-6-2023, we found only 24 townhomes between 350k and 450k, and only 54 two-bedroom condos between 175k and 350k here in Fairfax County.

[02:37:12] The Department of Housing and Community Development, which administers the set aside of a small number of affordable for-sale units in new developments, placed only five families in homes this last year. A more serious approach might include building prefabricated homes or townhomes on scattered county sites that would be sold under a shared equity model or creating a county community land trust to allow building under cooperative ownership.

[02:37:44] We could also offer some more serious down payment assistance. A black loan applicant in the United States is more than twice as likely to be denied a home mortgage as a white applicant. Recent research shows signs of continuing discrimination in mortgage lending, and we have indications of it here in Fairfax County based on paired testing that shows black and white applicants were treated differently.

[02:38:09] We need to fund additional testing and follow through on enforcement by the county attorney on lenders that discriminate. We should also remove all county funds from banks that discriminate in mortgage lending as recommended by the author of the 2017 report on impediments to fair housing.

[02:38:27] Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. Thank you very much. And we are on Speaker 41, Cookie Heimer-Blitz. Welcome. Thank you and happy Wednesday afternoon, everyone. My name is Cookie Heimer Blitz, and I live in the Hunter Mill District.

[02:38:46] I'm a member of the NAACP Fair Housing Subcommittee and will address some of the barriers people with disabilities face. The COG Fair Housing Report states that federal funding and inclusionary zoning are inadequate to meet housing needs for people with disabilities.

[02:39:03] Fairfax County needs to identify and employ innovative funding streams to supplement these efforts. People with disabilities may be disproportionately excluded from rental housing under some federal program rules, particularly those with criminal records and or interaction with the criminal justice system.

[02:39:23] Our county needs to ensure that reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are strongly considered in this regard, as well as educate landlords and other community members on this issue. A common challenge in finding the right housing is the lack of a readily available, accurate listing of accessible units.

[02:39:43] And this is an ongoing problem for as long as I've been involved in the disability community. This was also cited in the COG report, along with the imperative for neighborhoods with accessible sidewalks and streets and proximity to transit and paratransit options.

[02:40:00] Design standards are an important consideration for affordable, accessible housing. We request a minimum of 10% of all units in multifamily housing that receive public dollars be accessible to those with mobility issues, and 4% or more be accessible for those with hearing and visual needs.

[02:40:19] Universal design should become a standard requirement for supportive housing in FCRHA properties, the 50-plus action plan, and beyond. OREP enforces the Fairfax County Human Rights Ordinance and the Fairfax County Fair Housing Act.

[02:40:35] According to its annual report in 2020, 47% of complaints to OREP regarding housing were disability-related. Between 2018 and 2020, the number of housing cases based on disability doubled. We request that OREP devote greater resources to testing and enforcement, So the full depth of discrimination

is revealed, fair housing outcomes are delivered to county residents, and landlords and others who are violating the law are effectively deterred.

[02:41:06] Accessibility should never be an afterthought, but that is what often happens. Properties are developed, buildings go up, communities take shape, and measures to ensure compliance somehow get lost. At the Burrow and Tysons, which describes itself as luxury and upscale, there are no ADA-compliant parking spaces on the street.

[02:41:27] They are all in the parking garage, which is contrary to requirements. The creation of a consumer-citizen entity to insist in monitoring compliance while planning and constructing are occurring is necessary. Mistakes and oversights are identified before they are literally and figuratively cast in stone.

[02:41:47] Thank you, thank you. And I always appreciate the opportunity to participate in this process. Thank you very much. That brings us to Speaker No. 42, Arona Kessler. Welcome.

[02:42:04] My name is Arona Kessler. I live at 8549 Richmond Highway. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on Fairfax County's budget. I'm a housing paralegal during the day, but today my testimony is as a resident of the Route 1 Corridor and a member of the NAACP Housing Committee.

[02:42:25] I'd like to read specifically from page 164 on the draft Fairfax County Fair Housing Plan. This is regarding right to counsel. Thousands of residents in the region are displaced annually due to evictions. According to local legal services and fair housing organizations, many evictions occur because tenants do not understand their rights or obligations.

[02:42:46] It is estimated that only a small percentage of tenants facing eviction have legal representation, and those without representation almost always get evicted, regardless of a viable defense. In 2021, Maryland passed a right-to-counsel bill that would provide access to counsel for low-income tenants facing eviction, but it is inadequately funded.

[02:43:07] There are several legal providers in the region that are well-positioned to serve low-income tenants, including undocumented tenants. Although there would be an upfront investment, legal representation is less costly than serving families experiencing homeless. end quote. Important reforms have been made to the Virginia Residential Landlord-Tenant Act over the past couple years. When a tenant does not have the benefit of an attorney, they may not be aware of these rights or that there are several specific steps a landlord needs to go through to lawfully evict them. A tenant cannot assert their rights in court if they do not know what those rights are.

[02:43:43] Eviction cases are heard in Fairfax every Friday, and I invite every member of the board to come witness up to 100 tenants navigate a system that was set up to benefit their landlord. at the first hearing the judge will say to the tenant you're here because your landlord alleges you're in breach of your lease for non-payment they're entitled to a judgment for money and possession do you agree or disagree tenants are expected to answer this question without an explanation of what it means in this way many tenants unknowingly waive their rights to a trial and eviction proceedings move forward based on the tenants confused admission legally it is present at Fairfax County Courthouse to provide

[02:44:20] general information. Without right to counsel in a commensurate budget allocation, legal aid is not able to meet the current demand for services in Fairfax County. Since pandemic-related protections expired, the number of evictions being filed has gone back to pre-pandemic highs. With a robustly funded right to counsel program, housing attorneys can explain to tenants what their rights and options are. They

can help tenants access rent assistance or other resources that can help a tenant comply with their lease. Housing attorneys can also negotiate on behalf of clients for move out agreements or other compromises that allow tenants to leave their current housing with

[02:44:57] dignity and protect the interests of all involved. This investment in right to council can make Fairfax County a regional leader in fair housing and decrease the need for services related to homelessness and emergency shelter. Thank you for considering a well-funded right to council program for Fairfax tenants. Thank you very much. Speaker number 43 is Jerry Poggi. I know Jerry is here. Homelessness Prevention Director at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation and has five minutes. Welcome. Thank you so much. I'm Jerry Poggi, grateful for this opportunity.

[02:45:34] My spouse and I, with PhDs in curing cancer and promoting public health, raised our beloved daughter here. We could not duplicate our experience today of starting anew in Vienna. Gentrification excludes us and is worse for our poorer neighbors. Over 19 years, my congregation, UUCF, served hundreds of neighbors lacking winter shelter. We committed ourselves towards supporting affordable homes for all. Within the advocacy framework of our team of testifiers, please drive

[02:46:10] budget for the coming year to prevent evictions by ensuring two proven strategies, ensuring rights to counsel and maximizing rental assistance to those in need. America is facing a historic eviction crisis. Amid a nationwide housing shortage, rents are surging and many renters cannot keep pace. State eviction protections ended last year. Federal rental relief ended this year.

[02:46:39] Last month, low-income communities faced sharp drops in food benefits and rental assistance, and emergency Medicare benefits may soon end for some. More than 3.6 million evictions are filed each year.

[02:46:55] Tenants facing evictions risk losing their home and personal property. Evictions greatly increase the risk of homelessness, disrupt employment and education, and lead to adverse mental and physical health effects.

[02:47:12] Only 3% of tenants are represented by counsel. Represented tenants are more likely to remain housed, more likely to pay less in costs, and more likely to get more time to move if needed. Thanks for supporting an additional legal services attorney in eviction court.

[02:47:31] and a proposal to increase rent relief funding from carryover. Pay close attention, though, to nonprofits and faith communities closest to those at risk. Act before their situation becomes desperate. Low-wage communities have been sounding the alarm that conditions are bad and county assistance is not enough.

[02:47:54] Some testified earlier. Extra carryover funds for rent and food may not be enough. assess the situation as it evolves and respond. Second, monitor data on evictions and the number of unlawful detainers issued each month.

[02:48:14] Unlawful detainers are the first step in an eviction telling tenants to go to court. Their numbers rose sharply in January, February, and March of this year in our county to the highest level in years. Many tenants self-evict when they get this notice because they don't know how to fight an eviction, and they don't want an eviction on their records.

[02:48:38] Their exit deeply disrupts family life and our local economy. Armed with political will, Fairfax can move in a better direction to our collective benefit. Together, we must build back better. Thank you. Thank you very much, Jerry.

[02:48:55] and speaker number 44 is kelly allwine is kelly allwine here okay if you could come on down speaker 45 alicia archer okay if you could come come on down uh close here to the podium so when i call your name you're ready uh cindy jones speaker number 46 you could come on down as well and speaker 47 theresa chapman if you could come on down a little closer to the podium that's that's

[02:49:33] okay. Take your time. And we are on speaker 44. Kelly Allwine, welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Supervisors McKay, Stork, and Lusk. Ladies and gentlemen, I am Kelsey Allwine, retired U.S. Army officer and DOD civilian. I have lived in the Mount Vernon district for 31 years, but mostly drove through it until I retired in 2019 and joined Rising Hope Mission Church as both a member

[02:50:09] and one of the church leaders since then i have seen the local community through a new lens showing the poverty and homelessness present among the highway one corridor and i have made friends among people who are homeless like david and lisa who were just blessed to get a room in a walkout basement on one april just after rising hope's hypothermia shelter closed for the winter another

[02:50:40] friend, Jerry, is also homeless. He's in a wheelchair. Just this last weekend, David promised his old tent to Jerry since he and Lisa didn't need it. Can you imagine being in a wheelchair and having to put up a tent to keep yourself out of the weather and sleep on the ground when you can barely walk at times? It breaks my heart to see Jerry and others homeless. I see so many good

[02:51:13] people around the local community who need help getting housing. Many homeless people do not have good credit ratings which sometimes becomes a requirement for affordable housing later on and many have disabilities like Jerry or mental health challenges which makes it tough. I would like to see more affordable housing near the original Mount Vernon High School. I have been monitoring the redevelopment, and I'm most concerned about the 22 acres, which seems to be

[02:51:47] undesignated in phase two or three. I would like to see housing so that my friend Jerry and others have a place to live. I would also like to see a system set up that would help people build their credit so that they can get housing. Lastly, I would like to ensure that the end of the pandemic health emergency doesn't create new homelessness as people lose the resources that it gave to them little off topic but i would like to invite all of you to come to rising hope to see the very

[02:52:21] diverse beautiful gallery of art that our guests have created ranging from the ceiling tiles to the walls to the windowsills to beautify that space that we use for a hypothermia shelter in the winter so that homeless people are looking up at something beautiful instead of just ugly ceiling. And it's used also as, sorry, used also as our lunchroom all year long. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. Thank you, Ms. Allwine. Appreciate your testimony. And speaker

[02:52:58] number 45 is Alicia Archer. Welcome. Here I am. Welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you. Peace and blessing to everyone in attendance first off and when i speak i'm speaking because i'm very passionate about what's before me what i deal with as work uh and mr lask mr stork they've been to the church so they see a little bit of what's going on i'm a little nervous don't be

[02:53:29] nervous you're great i'm gonna speak my piece okay i work for rise and hope i am the community outreach and resource person I also run the kitchen I'm the kitchen manager and I can cook

and I invite you all to come taste my cooking because if you can warm the heart maybe we can win your vote okay I'd like to share a story I'm not going to go off the paper I'm going to speak

[02:54:02] from here the number of homeless is growing rapidly more than a small church like us can handle. I'm seeing on every corner a panhandler. They're coming from near and far. And for some reason, they're landing at the steps of Rising Hope and many other churches. We work hand in hand with each other to do the best we can to provide for them. But I'm going to speak for the voiceless,

[02:54:35] which is the mentally ill out here, homeless, sick, senior, young, who is burning their income, SSI checks for these hotels, then come to us to pay the balance.

[02:54:52] We operate solely on donations from organizations and just people in general. They come, they donate. That's how we feed them. We get small grants. The county, we refer them.

[02:55:09] I can only use resources. That's all the church is equipped to use is resources. So I refer them to the suitable people, and they get bounced back to us, which is very sad because working with Kennedy Shelter, this winter, we had to turn around people, turn them away, because the farm marshal only allowed a certain amount of people in our building, which they slept on the floor for space.

[02:55:41] And a young man died this morning, and that was the saddest thing I had to deal with. This man was turned away because we couldn't allow him in the building because of the farm martial laws.

[02:55:57] Kennedy's shelter was booked totally. He lost his fingers and his toes, then he later died. And he had come into the church to eat, or we would take things out to him to try to suit his needs as best as possible for us. We are definitely in need of funding to help the homeless, the churches even. If we could get some backup from the county to even help the churches so we could take care of them better. The Kennedy Shelter, I'm waiting to hear someone get sick

[02:56:36] behind the smell of the Kennedy Shelter. And at the least, they should have repairs done while they have to wait the four years for the very small building. The numbers are growing increasingly for us at that little old church.

[02:56:54] And God's will, we have stood up and faced it and doing the best we can with what we have to work with. But if we had the county behind us, we could do even more. And they have buildings abandoned around there that can be occupied to take some of them off the streets especially my seniors the ones that are in that hotel they're exhausted in their entire SSI so we provide their hygiene products for them

[02:57:28] and then there's the ones with the family which I'm working with now I'm very limited on resources for them and far as the mentally ill I want to put this out there it's hard for me to advocate for them because Virginia has the law or it's the law that unless they get permission, I can't speak for them. Well, they're voiceless because they're mentally not there to speak for themselves. So what do we do? I've talked to attorneys, everything, and the law blocks me from helping them and

[02:58:05] pointing them in the right direction and said to say that that could be any one of us any day. We never know when your mind's going to go blank. And I've seen some lawyers who are homeless out here. It's sad. It's very sad. And then on the CSB part of it, they're strapped in what they can do.

[02:58:26] And us trying to help each other to help someone is a strain. And if we had the counties backing with us to release some of this stuff or help us to find better ways to help people, well, that would

be greatly and truly needed and appreciated.

[02:58:45] That's all I have to say. Thank you very much, Alicia. Thank you. Thank you very much. Please consider coming to Rise and Hope for lunch. I would love for you to see. It's no better way to explain it than for you to see firsthand what we deal with.

[02:59:04] For sure. And I've been there, but I haven't been there since the art has been done. You need to come back. So you've got to come see that. Just give me a day's notice so I can prepare a feast for you, okay? Absolutely. Supervisor Stork. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. And I know Supervisor Laskin and I have all been there many times, and we're deeply committed to Rising Hope.

[02:59:23] But just on the Kennedy Shelter, I've been working with the county executive. We have a list of things that we've put together, met with them multiple times. We're making cool they're going to be taking action on that and getting some of the fixes done. It's obviously a lot more than what you can do with just some fixes, but that's really what the new shelter is all about.

[02:59:43] But we are going to make some major fixes on that this year, and we should see a big difference in that during the course of this year. Thank you, Supervisor Stork, and equally important, be monitoring and expediting the building of the new shelter, which we obviously want to get done as soon as possible. We are on speaker number 46, Cindy Jones.

[03:00:01] Welcome. Thank you very much. Good evening, Chairman McKay and the Fairfax County Supervisors. I feel a certain bond to all of you, many, many of you. Penny Gross, I live in your district. I worship and I shop there. Mr. Walkinshaw, our mission center is in his district.

[03:00:21] Mr. Stork, Mr. Lusk, you all represent Rising Hope, for which I work and I'm advocating today for. My name is Cindy Jones. I'm a native Northern Virginian, having lived here in the Northern Virginia area. Yes, I know I'm an anomaly.

[03:00:37] My entire life of 68-plus years, I've seen an ever-increasing gap between wages and the ability to pay for housing. When I grew up in the 50s and 60s, there was little to no homelessness. As we got to the late 80s, 90s, and since Y2K, rents have progressively skyrocketed and wages have not kept up.

[03:00:59] In fiscal year 2021, 60% of AMI for a family of four in Fairfax County was $77,400. A family or a single mother cannot make near that on minimum wage.

[03:01:16] I have been a part of trying to end homelessness for many, many years. I remember well when we started the office to prevent and end homelessness in 2007. The goal was to end homelessness in 10 years. It's six years past that, and I think, if anything, we are worse than we were at the time.

[03:01:37] My current employment is at Rising Hope Mission Church. We do our best to assist the homeless and those experiencing abject poverty in South County. I'm the first voice on the phone when you call. I'm the answer to the email when you write.

[03:01:54] And I'm the first face that most people encounter in the building. Despite our efforts, we are often not able to help these people meet their basic needs such as housing, jobs, transportation, and medical, mental health care. There's not a day that goes by that I do not have at least two requests for assistance for rent, utilities, or other basic needs that most of us take for granted.

[03:02:19] It breaks my heart every time I have to say I'm sorry. I don't have an answer for you. Nonprofits cannot do it all. Our money comes from God. the generous givers, but it does not begin to put a finger in

the dike of this situation.

[03:02:36] Every week we supplement 250 to 300 families with food. Every day we provide lunch to those that otherwise would probably not have anything to eat. During the winter we allowed 28 homeless men and women to find a warm place to lay their heads, but on April 1 they walked out with no better than they were when they started. How can we let this happen in one of the richest counties in the United States. What can we do as your constituents to help you in understanding that

[03:03:09] we are all a few paychecks away from being in the same predicament? I'm advocating for you and I implore you to find money to build affordable housing opportunities, including SROs and tiny houses that have been very successful in other parts of the country. I challenge you to follow the lead of Fairfax City, who have approved the Lamb Center and the Wesley Housing Partnership for 54 apartment units for the homeless. Housing has been proven to increase dignity,

[03:03:49] reduce incarceration and crime, and decrease emergency room visits and hospitalizations. It sounds like a win-win to me. Thank you for your time. Thank you, Cindy. We are on speaker 47, Therese Chapman. Therese Chapman is speaker number 47 to be followed by speaker number 48, Tammy Wong Dong. Welcome. Good evening, supervisors. My name is Therese Chaplin.

[03:04:19] I'm speaking as an individual, but I'm a member of St. Martin's Episcopal Church and the NAACP Housing Committee. I live at 6027 Bitter Nut Drive in the Franconia District. This is my first time testifying, and veterans advised me to share a personal story that would pull on your heart strings. Actually, I've never had to worry about shelter or choosing between paying for rent or food or medicine, but the pandemic made me understand some things. During the pandemic, I witnessed people desperate for basic needs of food and shelter. I recall long lines of cars stretching way down Franconia Road, waiting to turn into key center for free food. During the

[03:04:56] pandemic, I witnessed the brutal murder of George Floyd. It was jolted to the awareness that this country has much more work to do to ensure justice for all. My faith community started looking at housing in Fairfax County after affordable housing projects proposed in our own neighborhoods were getting pushback from other residents. Why is housing, life essential building block, out of reach for so many? As in so many other areas, people of color are disproportionately affected. And during the pandemic, I became a grandmother. I heard Chairman McKay during this year's housing symposium talk about his grandmother and how

[03:05:31] you should listen to grandmothers. And so I will repeat the ask from Mary Payton's opening remarks. Put $60 million in the fiscal year 24 budget for both building and preserving affordable housing. Use $30 million of this for a strike fund to preserve affordable homes, both stick-built and manufactured. Create a new position in the Department of Housing and Community Development focused on mobile home parks and create a comp plan amendment to address pressing issues.

[03:06:00] Enable lower-income minority residents to own a home so that they can build intergenerational wealth. Mandate a right to counsel in eviction court and fund legal aid attorney positions to meet the need. Add funds for rent and food relief since we have not returned to a pre-pandemic economy.

[03:06:18] Re-examine the plan and funding for summer heat relief for the homeless. Fund repairs to the A.C. and the stinking cesspool at the Kennedy Homeless Shelter or find alternate quarters while we wait

for its replacement. Hire staff to provide mental health services, police interventions, food, and most importantly, permanent shelter to our least fortunate neighbors.

[03:06:39] We who are fortunate have a responsibility to ensure all have equitable access to housing, especially to those still suffering the effects of systemic housing discrimination. We have a responsibility to our pandemic heroes, health care, grocery store workers, first responders, teachers, all those who provided for the rest of us.

[03:07:00] them to be able to live in fairfax county where they work we have a responsibility to make sure our vulnerable populations seniors those living with disabilities the homeless have homes and be able to thrive we have a responsibility to leave a legacy of a fully realized one fairfax where everyone has access to safe and affordable housing please hear this grandmother thank you thank you you, Ms. Chapman. And we are now on speaker number 48, which is Tammy Wandong. Welcome.

[03:07:38] Good evening, Chairman McKay, Board of Supervisors, and Mr. Hill. My name is Tammy Wandong, and I have 34 years of service with Fairfax County. I currently work as a Social Service Specialist 1 in Family Services Adult and Aging Division. I am also glad to say that I'm a proud union member of SEIU Virginia 512 and serve as the chapter president. I'm speaking to you on behalf

[03:08:13] of our union and our union members. You will also hear from other members tonight more than usual because this matter is of great importance to your employees and our members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. I would like to start by saying Fairfax County employees, like myself, help to make this county run. We give our all each day to make sure we provide the best services possible. All we ask is for a livable wage and respect in our workplaces

[03:08:50] for a job well done. We are working daily to acquire the signatures needed to file for an election. We need a union contract. We need it now. Through a contract, we can work in collaboration with county leadership, and that will benefit the county as a whole.

[03:09:10] We are experts and have valuable insights to share. Working together to improve workplace conditions will also improve retention and attract new employees to stay for a career, not just for a job. However, recent developments regarding wage fairness make me understand even more just how important it is for us to have a say in the decision-making process.

[03:09:36] Our calls for action on wage compression and raises have not been heard. I have applied for many positions during my tenure. I was never called upon. However, I stayed to join in the fight to help many of my coworkers who have just one paycheck and are challenged when they acquire a second job to pull the ends together.

[03:10:02] But because of COVID-19, my position as a human service assistant was abolished and I was placed, not interviewed, in the position I am currently with. So this is why I'm here, hoping that fairness will show up.

[03:10:22] We recognize that when the county proposes to fund the market rate adjustment at only 2%, which is suggested to be 5.44%, let's call it what it is, another pay cut.

[03:10:41] What's frustrating is that we come year after year. I've been coming for a long time, from 2015 to 2023. County workers lost approximately $32,000 each due to raises only being fully funded three out of the nine past years.

[03:11:04] With county proposing to fund only 38% of the MRA, county employees would have lost approximately $45,000. It's really, it's overall insulting. Even though the Board of Supervisors won't fully fund the general workers' pay plan each year, We see that you made sure to propose enough money for the next incoming board to get a comfortable raise.

[03:11:33] We want to be clear. We want everyone, including the Board of Supervisors, to make a living wage. And we recognize that having a real living wage for elected officials is critical to ensuring that working people and county employees can run for office and serve.

[03:11:52] But let's be fair about it. To propose up to 45% raises for the board and only 2% raises for general employees is simply unacceptable. And lastly, with $109 million budget surplus, we know the county has enough money to make a difference for us.

[03:12:13] It's time to prioritize the Fairfax workforce. We call on you to fully fund the MRA and to work with us to do everything in your power to end wage compression and to ensure fair pay for all employees.

[03:12:29] This is also why county employees are excited about taking the next steps to finally get to the bargaining table. To negotiate a strong union contract that ensures the changes we need with consistency and accountability.

[03:12:47] No more collective begging. It's time for collective bargaining and unions for all. Thank you. Thank you, Tammy. Now on speaker number 49, Norman Hall, welcome.

[03:13:07] Good evening. My name is Norm Hall, and I work for the Fairfax County Department of Transportation. My comments reflect SCIU Virginia 512 membership and are not made on behalf of the county. Prior to the pandemic, I was winding down my educational career as a SAC teacher after and I saw myself making a difference for the community in a cooperative, pro-worker setting.

[03:13:31] Together with my fellow union members, we advocated for pandemic leave, safety standards, and job protections for our so-called essential employees. I don't recall much public pushback in 2020. That was also when our advocacy led to the adoption of the county's paid family medical leave benefit.

[03:13:48] We had victories during a very dark time. I began working in my current position as part of the job match program. In my new role, and with service on both the SEIU Board and the Employee Advisory Council, I have learned so much about the strengths and weaknesses of county employment.

[03:14:05] Fairfax County was long considered a premier workforce, and now surrounding counties like Prince William and Loudoun, not to mention federal agencies and private sector firms, are attracting interest from our employees. For Fairfax to compete and maintain a qualified workplace with high morale, it must value its employees. However, the current proposed budget shows that priorities are headed in another direction. Hiring bonuses and the pay adjustments for directors of agencies and departments have led to confusion about compensation philosophy and the lack of transparency. While everyone deserves wages that reflect their hard work

[03:14:43] and experience, what's being done for the current rank and file? The current pay equity adjustments known as compression pay studies have been a messy work in progress. Equity pay adjustments that have arbitrary 60% pay ban caps and no back pay, regardless of discrepancy, are partial victories at best. Please make sure that all employees, especially the term limited staff, get the full market

rate adjustment as this will be all they can get. And enough with the full-scale reliance on management by budget. Let's add management by workforce. My co-workers and I have observed that

[03:15:20] management thinks the department is doing well if a staff member exits on November 15th and that position is filled by June 15th. This is a cost-saving move because it's likely the person ending the year is paid less than the person who left due to onboarding and training costs.

[03:15:38] The current system rewards this. Who really pays in this scenario? The employees who have to cover unfilled positions. But while this may be okay when attrition rates are historically low, what about now when they're historically high? Our first collective bargaining agreement should address severe understaffing practices that don't capture the headlines. Shorten library hours and excessive child care wait lists are examples where there was no budget crisis, but both employees in the public who expect high level services have been harmed. The board should seek testimony to understand these problems veteran county staff know that not all problems are budget problems

[03:16:16] you should too whether it's in the budget or otherwise it's time for the county to prioritize its workforce and truly recognize us for what we are and what we have always been essential workers thank you for your time thank you norm speaker number 50 karen johnson welcome good evening board of supervisors my name is karen johnson i am a proud fairfax county employee and a proud

[03:16:50] union member of SEIU 512. My comments tonight are of my own and not on behalf of the county. I have worked for the county for nearly 11 years at the child care center located in the Panino building where I care for the children of my fellow county employees. A year ago I spoke to you right here asking you to fund raises for your employees in last year's budget. I shared how a real raise a livable raise wage would change my life because I struggled last year to afford to find affordable housing and was worried that I would be sleeping in my car and I was going to

[03:17:29] park outside of here and use the showers. I have since found a place but a questionable place in a questionable neighborhood. It's the only thing that I could afford. It is still about an hour and 15 minutes away from here. Every pay week or every paycheck is still a balancing act for me.

[03:17:50] So I'm asking that when the county funds the market rate adjustments at only 2%, when it should be the 5.44, as Tammy said, let's call it what it is. When everything else goes up, that's considered a pay cut. Workers like me cannot afford to not have the MRA fully funded.

[03:18:12] So imagine my shock when the county somehow found money to boost the board's pay by $28,000 to $38,000. And I'm glad for you. Then I read an article in the Washington Times that someone expressed about child care and not being able to afford that.

[03:18:30] We all need the increase. I would like to be able to afford a place where I don't have to fear for my safety as I get out of my car to enter into my home. But when you offer the measly 2% to your staff while giving yourselves the 30%, it speaks volumes to me.

[03:18:47] And frankly, it shows a little bit out of touch that you are. So when it comes to the needs of those that rely on you, so we ask you to support us and the families that work here. With the $109 million budget surplus, the county has enough money, in my opinion, to make a difference for us.

[03:19:08] It's time to prioritize us, the workforce. When the county employees struggle to live and work in the very county that we serve and we have to seek other employment or other jobs, it's clear that change

is needed.

[03:19:26] We need the union contract that will secure the improvements and ensure the MRA is fully funded every year. The time is up for the begging, as Tammy said. We are ready for collective bargaining. I look forward to securing a strong contract under the union and for myself as well as my co-workers.

[03:19:46] Thank you for listening tonight. Thank you. And we're now on speaker number 51, Heather Critchfield. Heather Critchfield. Okay, how about Ann Forno?

[03:20:07] This is speaker number 52. I was told I was 53, but I'll go. Good evening. This is very intimidating, so thank you all for being here to listen to us. This is democracy in action, and it's a lovely thing to see these days.

[03:20:24] Supervisor Alcorn, you are my supervisor. Thank you for your vote against the raise. Supervisor Herity, thank you for the building, and your vote against the raise as well. I am an early childhood specialist in the Neighborhood and Community Services Division. I've worked for the county for almost two years.

[03:20:41] I am a proud union member, but I am speaking on my own behalf. And before coming here, I was a teacher and an educator in different capacities for about 25 years. I want to follow up on a couple of things that I heard at two of the town halls I attended. I was kind of surprised by how cavalierly it was stated that, on average, employees will receive between 4% and 7% increases.

[03:21:07] I really want to encourage you not to be cavalier about this. There are about 10,000 employees in the county. About 2,000 are non-merit, although we think they have tremendous merit. That name needs to change. But they're non-merit. They will not get longevity.

[03:21:23] They will not get merit, and they will not get performance increases. They will get your MRA. So please know when you cast your vote in May for the final budget, those are people's lives you're impacting. Don't just look at that 4% to 7% on average. I can tell you anecdotally that the 4.01% MRA from last year, combined with my 1.75% performance increase that I was fortunate enough to receive because my supervisor was able to be objective, did not cover the 10% rent increase that I was given courtesy of Westminster Management.

[03:21:56] I don't have your protection because I'm not a property owner, so my rent went up 10%. I could not make that increase given my MRA and my performance increase. So I think you need to know things like that. And I am one of the more fortunate. I'm on a higher level pay grade.

[03:22:13] I want you to really think about the folks who are non-merit. They don't qualify for those things. The county itself has said $17 is a living wage. In my division, the minimum wage is $15.90. 2% of that is about 30 more cents but outside of NCS the minimum wage is not $15.90 so what is 2% going to get folks I ask you to think about every single one of those people when you cast your vote I talked to a co-worker today she has two children and a spouse two incomes they're having to make decisions about what to put back on the shelves what they can't purchase she's an

[03:22:52] educator like me I talked to someone else who said they keep combining departments and not replacing not filling positions he's having to make shortcuts just to get by to be able to do his job so people are out there making really hard decisions another colleague has worked for 13 years for the county she went from $20 an hour to $22 an hour in 13 years please drill down on these

[03:23:18] numbers. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 53, Terrence Taylor. Terrence Taylor. Is Terrence Taylor not here? Terrence Taylor is not here. How about Arlene Williams, Speaker 54? Welcome.

[03:23:43] Welcome. Thank you. Good evening. My name is Arlene Williams. I'm currently an administrative assistant for the Therapeutic Recreation Services. After working as a program assistant with the adult day health care center for 15 years. I am speaking on behalf of myself only. I'm also a proud union member of SEIU Virginia 512. I know that my co-workers and I work hard each day to make sure we provide the best services possible for our residents. Despite this work, we often feel

[03:24:19] unappreciated. The current budget proposal doesn't help with this feeling. For me, though, The work is more than just about money. It is about service. However, we still deserve a living wage and benefits that reflect all that we do.

[03:24:37] Showing us respect will help more Fairfax employees stay in the jobs that we love. All I ever wanted when I worked at the Dulte Health Care Center was to brighten people's lives, their days. The pandemic has been particularly challenging and required extra effort.

[03:24:57] When I put together a drive-by carnival-themed parade, where families brought their loved ones to the center and participated in five activities from their cards, or when we sent out greeting cards for the holidays and birthdays in order for people to be able to stay in touch when we were closed, I felt like we brought some happiness during a dark time.

[03:25:21] While I love what I do, it's not been without hardship. I have personally been impacted by the financial cutbacks and extreme rise in inflation. I am single and taking care of my mom and basically living in a sandwich generation with my son at home.

[03:25:40] I am concerned about how am I going to make it. This is one of the reasons I'm speaking out this evening. It is time for a change. I want everyone to make a living wage, including the board. Offering a 30% to 40% increase to the board and a 2% MRA to the county employees is simply not fair and unacceptable, especially when the counties around us are giving their county government employees more than 2%.

[03:26:09] It is time to compensate the employees of Fairfax County by giving us at least an MRA of 5.44%. My fellow union members, and I look forward to working together with you to improve workplace conditions, improve retention, attract new employees, and appreciate those who have been in the county for a long time.

[03:26:34] A union contract will help us get to where we want to be. Thank you for your time. Thank you. Speaker number 55, Warren Smith. Is speaker number 55 not here?

[03:26:52] Warren Smith. Warren's not here. Warren is not here. speaker 56 david broder is here welcome thank you chairman mckay vice chairman gross members of the board county executive hill appreciate the opportunity to be here with you tonight for this public hearing my name is david broder i'm very proud to serve as the president of seiu virginia 512 and i am very proud very proud to be here tonight in particular with the amazing frontline employees that you've heard from tonight and you see before you who have worked

[03:27:30] long days and who are here tonight some away from their family some with their families as you hear because they care deeply deeply about the community that they work for the community that

they hope to live in but often can't afford to this community of Fairfax County and I just

[03:27:53] want to take a moment to recognize everybody who's here tonight I'll be honest I don't have much to add from what you've heard tonight and I don't think I could say it more passionately or more eloquently than you've heard. You've heard from your employees how much they care, how much they care about their jobs, how much they care about the people they serve, and how much they care about their ability to take care of their family. You hear their passion. I think you hear their

[03:28:31] love for this, and you hear their frustration. Of course you hear their frustration. A 2% MRA does not reflect Fairfax County values. It does not reflect the work that we have done together.

[03:28:45] We have done extraordinary work together. We have come together and solved big problems. Together, everyone here and all of you worked to pass pandemic leave that kept people on the job, that kept our community moving forward. We passed six weeks of paid family medical leave, the best policy in the Commonwealth. We passed the best collective bargaining ordinance in Virginia. We can do that again. It will take your leadership.

[03:29:14] And I know folks have said a 2% is just a proposal and we can do better, but we want to be very clear. Boosting that 2% to 3% is not acceptable. Boosting it to 4% is not acceptable.

[03:29:32] We need to fully fund the MRA. We need to work creatively to end wage compression in all its forms. We need to make sure that there is adequate staffing so that everybody can work hard and then go home to their families. We can do this.

[03:29:48] the money is there we just need to know that the will is there thank you very much thank you david speaker number 57 is not here is that right speaker number 57 finn yates is not here either

[03:30:13] no finn yates okay uh speak oh he is here okay okay how about larissa zier is larissa here and she is if she could come uh down closer to the podium mitchell crispel and kevin o'brien if I've just called your name if you can try to make your way closer to the podium.

[03:30:44] I would appreciate that. Finn, welcome. Hello. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. Even at 13, I can notice Fairfax County. Hold on one second, Finn. If folks could try to leave quietly, just let's respect all of our speakers here.

[03:31:03] You can start over again. Finn, welcome. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. Even at 13, I can notice Fairfax County becoming less and less economically diverse. My church, UUCF, has a program called Coming of Age, where teenagers learn who they really are and what they stand for.

[03:31:21] More gentrification continues to make low-income people move farther and farther out. We need more affordable housing to solve this problem. Hypothermia sheltering has just ended for the homeless, and while half will self-resolve by somehow finding shelter they couldn't in the winter, about 40 will not.

[03:31:40] I've seen the tent encampments close to the Emory Rucker Shelter, where people have to live under trees because they can't afford housing. On the other hand, some people live in a house, but many of these houses need to be renovated.

[03:31:56] Last Christmas, I volunteered to hand out breakfast. As a man walked over from the row of houses, I watched his breath fog there. He accepted the burritos and the Christmas cookies, but then his face lit up at the sight of boxes of hats and gloves. He said it was always cold for him and his friends.

[03:32:14] And I could see why. The houses were old, and it looked like they hadn't been renovated. We don't have enough quality, affordable housing available, so people can rent a comfortable home and still be able to pay. There are many places where affordable housing can be built, and there's the money. We just need to build the homes.

[03:32:33] While building new homes or renovating the old ones, we also should make sure that we are not only fitting rich people, but also the low income. While more apartments are being built, they all are luxury, which means they start at $1,500 a month for one bedroom.

[03:32:50] While visiting the Rising Hope Mission Church, I've learned that the people who live in the area are angered by the ongoing talk of renovating the area. When the area is renovated, all the previous families living in the area can no longer afford to keep living.

[03:33:06] However, the rich people who move in still want their houses cleaned or people to work at the restaurants. How can anyone afford to work these low-paying jobs if there is no houses they can afford to live in? They can't. Thank you. Thank you very much, Ben. Nice job.

[03:33:29] And we are going to go to Speaker 58, 59, and 60. And then after that, I am going to go back to Speaker 37, 38, and 39, who I know has also arrived. And so we'll hear from two more folks, and then we'll go back to those other three speakers.

[03:33:47] At this time, welcome, Larissa.

[03:33:58] Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the board. My name is Larissa Zaire. I'm commenting in support of Mobile Home Preservation as an attorney with Legal Aid Justice Center, a nonprofit organization that partners with low-income communities across Virginia to achieve racial, social, and economic justice through free civil legal assistance and advocacy.

[03:34:18] Fairfax County mobile homeowners are facing down out-of-state investors that are buying their parks and destroying their future. We urge the county to do three things to preserve these parks. Increase committed funding for preserving affordable housing by an additional $30 million. Allocate significant funding for park preservation.

[03:34:38] And guarantee a $750,000 fund for homeowners to make health and safety repairs. In just the last two years, LAJC has worked with residents of three of the eight parks in Fairfax County, Harmony Place, Rays, and Engleside, when the parks were sold out from under their feet.

[03:34:57] I just want to shout out the courage of the residents of these three parks, many of whom are here tonight, who organized to make a counteroffer of purchase with a nonprofit partner, as is their right, in just 60 days. That's the very constrained time frame allowed to them by Virginia law.

[03:35:14] We recognize and appreciate the county's significant efforts to support residents with funding. Nevertheless, in all three parks, with time constraints, limited funding, and another sale offer on the table, The efforts were too little, too late.

[03:35:29] All of the parks sold to out-of-state investors and all of the residents, instead of a secure future in their home that they own, have a future in limbo. The good news is that overcoming the chief constraints, time and funding is well within the county's power and priorities.

[03:35:46] By accepting the Manufactured Housing Task Force recommendations, the board has shown their commitment to reversing the policy level neglect of manufactured homes. These three actions will

put teeth behind the county's commitments. generate fiscally responsible investments in affordable housing, and most importantly, answer the call of the at least 1,700 Fairfax County families to make their homeownership permanent, meaningful, and a way to thrive.

[03:36:13] Mobile homes fill a critical housing gap because they are relatively affordable even without any housing subsidy. Subsidies that many Latine, immigrant, and low-income residents can't access because of severely limited funding and immigration status restrictions. For especially these residents, precarious as they may be, Manufactured homes are the best and only option to own a home.

[03:36:34] Making parks truly stable is a step toward racial justice and more equitable policies that advance homeownership for these historically marginalized communities. While manufactured homeowners may own their home, they're extremely vulnerable to losing the land underneath it. Across Virginia and the U.S., out-of-state investors and private equity firms are purchasing parks at an alarming rate.

[03:36:54] We will see more park sales in the short term. Sales frequently lead to two things, significant rent increases or redevelopment. Rays and Engleside parks sold in November 2022 for a total of about $24.2 million. That's almost three times the assessed value of $8.1 million.

[03:37:11] The new owners will almost certainly drastically increase rent or redevelop to make good on their investment. Residents are trapped with increasing rents or losing their assets entirely. Almost all their homes are impossible to relocate because of structure or cost. The county should be proactive, not reactive.

[03:37:29] Instead of waiting to compete with an offer in hand, the county should increase flexible funding available for park preservation. In Fairfax County, park residents and non-profits should approach park owners now and make affirmative offers, exactly what the Manufactured Housing Task Force recommends.

[03:37:47] And this can be a successful investment. Park prices would be more in line with assessed values if the owner does not already have an offer in hand from a private equity firm. Non-profit-owned parks across Virginia, including Southwood in Charlottesville and Bermuda estates in Richmond have sustainable ownership models. Mobile homes are viewed as a depreciating asset, but studies show they stay the same or even appreciate if the land underneath them is stable.

[03:38:12] Finally, the county should increase the funding allocated to total $750,000 for mobile homeowners to make health and safety repairs and improvements. Because of historic policy neglect, homeowners have fewer resources to improve their mobile homes. This small investment would make a significant impact in improving the quality of life for many residents. Please put the manufactured Housing Task Force recommendations into action by increasing funding for preservation and health and safety improvements. If the county does not act this year, even more parks will probably be in the hands of out-of-state investment firms by next year, and many of our communities won't be

[03:38:48] here to preserve and protect. Thank you very much. Thank you, Melissa. Speaker 59, Mitchell Crispell. Crispell? He's on the telephone. Hi, I'm here on the phone. Yes, we can hear you. Go ahead. Great. My name is Mitch Crispell, and I'm a Director of Real Estate Development for the Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing, or APA. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify. APA is so excited to be developing three projects in Fairfax County, the 150-unit Oakwood

[03:39:24] Meadows Senior Residences near the Van Dorn Metro, set to open this summer, the 80-unit Ilda's Overlook Senior Residences on Braddock Road at the site of the former Northern Virginia Training Center, set to welcome residents at the end of the year, and the 516-unit Dominion Square project in Tyson, set to start construction early next year.

[03:39:43] These projects are helping to address the enormous need for affordable housing in the county. The county's investment in these projects has been the absolute key to their success. Put simply, it is not possible to build projects like these without county investment. Especially now, we're seeing construction costs go up from inflation and also rising interest rates, which reduces the amount of conventional debt the projects can afford to underwrite.

[03:40:07] Rising costs plus lower sources means a bigger funding gap and even more need for county and state resources to make the projects viable. There are three benefits to devoting county resources to affordable housing. First, county dollars are the building block toward project feasibility.

[03:40:23] Without these, we just can't build the housing that serves the county's needs. Second, projects are more competitive for state funds, including 9% tax credits, if they can show an investment from the local level. Therefore, investing county dollars in affordable housing serves as leverage to bring more state and federal dollars into the county.

[03:40:40] Third, we all share the goal of supporting families and seniors at the lowest income level, 30% of the area median income. These units in particular are very difficult to finance without local capital subsidy. The county's investment allows APA to provide housing for those extremely low-income and vulnerable members of our community.

[03:40:58] So in terms of policy, I first want to say two thank yous. So first, thank you for doubling the county's new housing production goal to provide 10,000 new affordable homes by 2034. We're in it with you on that. And second, thank you for maintaining the baseline funding approved in FY23 for affordable housing.

[03:41:14] As we move toward the declared goal of $0.02 on the tax rate, increasing the fiscal year 24 baseline amount is an important step. In the context of the $90 million balance included in the FY24 advertised budget and recognizing priorities such as tax relief and employee compensation, an increase in baseline funding for affordable housing could be achieved.

[03:41:33] An additional half-cent would use just $16 million in balance. We would therefore achieve a funding level equal to $1.5 of the tax rate in the annual budget. I encourage you to prioritize the funding of affordable housing in the budget, given the rising need, the increased difficulty of financing these projects, the extra state and federal dollars leveraged as a result of county investment, and the need to serve our most vulnerable residents.

[03:41:55] Thank you so much. Thank you. Our next speaker is also a call-in, Kevin O'Brien. Mr. O'Brien, can you hear us? I can. Can you all hear me? Yes, we can. Go ahead. All right. Well, good evening, members of the board.

[03:42:15] My name is Kevin O'Brien, and I am testifying this afternoon, or I guess it's evening now, on behalf of the Washington Area Bicycles Association and its 7,000 members throughout Northern Virginia and the Capital Region. Let me begin first by saying thank you for the opportunity to comment on this fiscal year 2024 budget.

[03:42:36] We have worked very closely with partner organizations within the Fairfax Healthy Communities Coalition on joint written budget testimony submitted earlier this week. So some of my points will sound familiar. For 50 years, WABA has worked to transform the capital region by improving the conditions for people who bike.

[03:42:55] Our work to advocate for dedicated bike infrastructure, past laws that promote safe roadway behavior, and provide education programming for all road users has resulted in a drastically different cultural and political approach to biking for transportation here in Fairfax County and across the region.

[03:43:12] Biking can and should be an equitable, safe, low-cost, time-saving, and sustainable way to navigate our community for all residents. Bicycling is also absolutely critical if the county is to meet its carbon reduction commitments to combat climate change. With transportation contributing 42% of the carbon emissions in the county, we need an all-of-the-above approach.

[03:43:33] That, of course, includes electrification, but will also require reducing car trips, and the Humble Bicycle can be just the solution. But to do that, though, we'll take this board making some hard choices. We must reprioritize our transportation spending, slow or halt expensive roadway expansion that exacerbates traffic congestion in our climate crisis, and recommit to growing our transit and active transportation networks, including our trails, sidewalks, and bikeways.

[03:44:02] We want to commend the work that the board has taken so far to fund the county's active transportation and safe streets programming in this and prior budget. However, we believe that more can be done, and we therefore urge the following steps for this board's consideration.

[03:44:18] First, commit to making our streets safer for all users. Last year on May 10th, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously endorsed the Safe Streets for All program, a comprehensive initiative to address systemic transportation safety issues for people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving.

[03:44:38] Including in the recommendations is a call for roadway infrastructure changes to slow traffic on our community streets. Unfortunately, the county has not yet dedicated the staff or funding to begin executing that program. and the ramifications are dire. In 2022, the county saw its highest ever number of traffic-related pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities. The delay in meaningful action cannot continue.

[03:45:03] And so first, we want to urge you to fund Safe Streets for All program manager. We urge the board to fully stand up at Safe Streets for All program, beginning with the inclusion of the program manager full-time position at FCDOT in fiscal year 24 to coordinate the efforts. And secondly, we urge you to fund the expansion of the automated speed enforcement programs to every school and major construction site in the county. We know that state regulations limit the use of camera technology to only those two site categories, but the county could still

[03:45:39] make a meaningful effort to curb speeding by maximizing its ASE usage in these two types of site. The second big category that we want to urge action on is to act on the active Fairfax transportation plan recommendations. The active Fairfax transportation plan, the county's most significant overhaul of its bicycle, pedestrian, and trails plan, continues to round into form, which we'd love to see, and is expected to be finalized this year. The plan's recommendations address critical safety needs for residents who already walk and bike and also make improvements

[03:46:14] to allow more residents to choose walking and biking to conveniently and safely meet their daily transportation needs. Realizing the plan's vision, though, will require substantial, dedicated, and consistent funding, and that should start now. So we want to urge you to continue to prioritize in making ad hoc funding available for the county's $100 million emergency sidewalk repair program.

[03:46:39] Before we even begin to build more things, we must return our facilities to a state of good repair by addressing the backlog of unfunded pedestrian and bicycle improvements. We commend FCDOT's efforts so far to develop a robust and equitable prioritization process, but we urge the board to look at all possible means to expedite these critical repairs this year and in fiscal year 24.

[03:47:04] Second, we urge you to enter into formal negotiations with VDOT. We are cognizant of the uncertainty regarding maintenance responsibility for facilities along many VDOT-managed roadways, but we cannot continue to pass the buck when it comes to fixing our crumbling sidewalks. Clarify maintenance roles on all county roadways so as to provide FCDOT with clear mandate and comprehensive scope for its budget.

[03:47:25] We would then call on the board to identify and make available the permanent maintenance funding necessary to keep all of those facilities in tip-top shape. And to conclude, we feel strongly that the adoption of the measures we discussed would meaningfully contribute to the county's transportation, climate, and community goals by making our roads safer and our active transportation networks more connected.

[03:47:47] Fairfax County can and should be a place where walking, biking, and rolling are the best ways to get around. I want to thank you for your time and consideration. I know it's a long day, but I really appreciate you taking the time to listen to all of us today. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[03:48:04] And at this time, I'm going to go back to Speaker 37, 38, and 39. And Speaker 37 is Marianela Funes, to be followed by Glenda Benitez and Juan Antonio Magarin.

[03:48:21] If they all three are here, if they are ready to testify, first we will hear from Marianela. Welcome.

[03:48:46] Good evening. I am Marianela, a community organizer with Tenants and Workers United. Before I begin, I want to thank the supervisors who took the time to meet with us and listen what mobile home communities have to say.

[03:49:05] So thank you for taking your time before this public hearing. Marianela is speaking on behalf of Tenants and Workers United. For over 35 years, Tenants and Workers United have worked with low-income communities of color across Northern Virginia, including in South Fairfax County along the Route 1 corridor, with a focus on mobile home communities.

[03:49:33] When I started working with mobile home communities, it was during the pandemic, when the pandemic hit the country. And some folks used to tell me to be careful with the mobile home properties, saying those communities are dangerous, and even calling them derogatory names, like the trailers of the terror.

[03:49:55] However, what I found was united communities, hard workers who take care of each other. They love their homes because their work, school, and other services are nearby.

[03:50:11] working class people that were struggling not only because of the pandemic, but also because of their housing conditions, forgotten for decades by the local government. And it's great that the county is focusing in building more units of affordable housing.

[03:50:28] However, we must be aware that while you are building housing, on the other hand, you are losing great opportunities to preserve communities like mobile home properties. We know that you have approved the recommendation of the Mobile Home Task Force and that you have allocated funding for one staff person to work with mobile home residents.

[03:50:51] But we need more. We need funding and action to protect families. Mobile home communities provide unique opportunities for low-income families to own their own homes. Over the past two years, large out-of-state companies have bought up various mobile home communities, Leaving current residents uncertain about their future and unable to control any drastic and unfair increases in fees or rent.

[03:51:22] That's why we are here and we urge you to, number one, allocate $60 million total to preserving or replacing affordable housing. Number two, allocate a significant amount of that funding for mobile home residents to buy the land of their community.

[03:51:44] with support from community partners and other stakeholders. Allocate 750,000 total of mobile home owners to make health and safety repairs and improvements.

[03:52:00] On the OneFarfax policy promises that you will look intentionally and systematically at barriers that might create gaps in opportunity. One way to address these systematic opportunities is to allocate adequate funding to the preservation and improvement of mobile home communities.

[03:52:22] We invite you to explore all possibilities, including land purchases, co-ops, and land trusts to help residents secure home ownership and housing stability in their communities they love. We must get creative and proactive with how we reimagine affordable housing.

[03:52:44] Thank you for your consideration. Thank you very much for your testimony. And speaker number 38 is Glenda Benitez. Welcome. Hello, good evening.

[03:53:01] I'm here to give my testimony. So I just want to thank you all for having us here tonight. I'm Glenda Benitez. I moved to Harmony Place in 2017 with my father. Then I met my husband, and the rest is history.

[03:53:17] I would describe my small home community as exclusive. Also, a community that has potential. In our community, we all help each other. That's the best part. One of my neighbors changes our water heater. My other neighbor helps us remodel our carpet.

[03:53:35] And the most important of them all babysits my infant child. When I moved to the community in 2017, it was in a horrible condition. You can smell something was wrong with the plumbing. Homes would flood due to the creek that's nearby.

[03:53:53] As I mentioned previously, we fixed our home. We fixed our plumbing, as I mentioned, sorry, with the help of the county and nonprofit organization, Tenants and Workers United, we had some repairs done, but our worries continue to this day.

[03:54:20] We worry about the increase of rent. We worry about what if the property owner decides to sell. The whole community would be homeless. While you work on the HHY 2024, we urge you to allocate

a significant amount of funding for the mobile home park acquisition created by the community members with the support of the community partners and other stakeholders.

[03:54:50] We are asking for funds to preserve our community. We're asking for funds that can help with repairs. There are homes on the property that are still suffering from mold due to the plumbing, but mainly supervisors. We want security. We want ownership of our homes.

[03:55:07] And to build on that ownership, creating generational wealth. Thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns and our requests today. Thank you, Glenda. Thank you. And we are now on Speaker 39, Juan Antonio Magarin.

[03:55:25] And I know that we have an interpreter as well. Welcome.

[03:55:57] Our children have grown up and grown up in the community and for us that place is our home. It is something valuable for us, something very precious.

[03:56:13] Because as I explained earlier, our children have grown up and grown up. And they themselves also feel like we like the area. We like it because it's a very accessible area. but lately we have been worried about the development that is the Ruta 1.

[03:56:37] We have seen last year, for example, that large companies or investors have come to buy three areas of mobile home, as well as where we live and the truth is that we have that fear that we really are and by what we see, we are the next to that we are the next, that we have that path that we carry on.

[03:57:03] We really don't want to go through the same situation if we are in this moment here, because the truth is that in December last year we received a notification of the increase of rent, donde no más lo daban 30 días.

[03:57:24] Realmente nosotros somos personas trabajadoras, somos personas de bajos recursos y si realmente estamos este día acá es porque queremos a ver si ustedes nos pueden incluir en el presupuesto para que así nosotros podamos tener una estabilidad diferente para que tal vez eso pueda ser destino en fondos para construir y conservar y reparación de nuestras viviendas Because as I said at the beginning, for us, that is our home.

[03:57:55] And we don't want to make the day of tomorrow have a notification or a bad moment that we have a surprise that the actual owner sold to a corporation and we have to go out of the area and find another place where we can move.

[03:58:14] When we are really accustomed and adapted to what is the area, Por eso mismo quisiéramos que ustedes, como decía hace un momento, puedan destinar fondos para poder conservar a nosotros o a ver si hubiera una manera de que ustedes busquemos para que ustedes busquen una persona o una sin fines de lucro, una organización y nos pueda ayudar a lo que es comprar la propiedad o tal vez ustedes, por medio de ustedes, pueda gestionar que el condado pudiera comprar así como en años anteriores lo hicieron en otra

[03:58:51] comunidad por ahí cerca. Gracias por escucharnos y espero tome en cuenta la petición de nosotros porque realmente como le digo es algo que nosotros ya no podemos vivir tranquilo, ya no podemos dormir tranquilo por la misma situación. Gracias de antemano. Hello, my name is Karen. I'm the interpreter.

[03:59:17] Good evening, Chairman McKay and supervisors. My name is Juan Antonio Margaine. I am a resident and member of the Pandan Terrence Mobile Home Community. I have been living in the community for 25 years and paying my taxes to this country.

[03:59:33] Just like me, there are other residents who have lived here for the same period of time or longer. Our children were born in this community. For us and our children, this is our home, and we would not like to lose our houses. All of us are afraid and concerned about the development of the Route 1 corridor.

[03:59:52] We have seen that in the last year, three mobile home communities have been sold to large companies or investors. And from what we have seen, we believe that the same future awaits us. We do not want nor would we want to lose our home.

[04:00:09] We are hard workers and low-income people. In December, we received a rent increase of $150 without first receiving proper notification. We are already paying rent on the land of $1,100 a month.

[04:00:26] So this is added to all the costs for the services of water, electricity, gas, and ECTA. For this reason, we are asking you to help us, listen to us, and include us in the budget you are working on today. We ask, one, to allocate funds for the preservation and repair of our communities.

[04:00:46] Two, to look for a proactive plan so that we, the tenants, can own the land in conjunction with other nonprofit organizations or that you have the county buy this land from the certain owner as they have done in previous years in other trailer communities in this area where residents pay around $500 for the land.

[04:01:11] Thank you very much for your attention and consideration. Thank you very much. And thank you all for joining us and supporting this testimony as well.

[04:01:26] We appreciate all of you coming out. And with that, we are going to go back to our regular number here, and we are at speaker number 61. We have a series of videos that have been submitted, starting with speaker number 61, Whitney Redding.

[04:01:46] Hi, my name is Whitney Redding. I'm a resident of Mason District and co-founder of Friends of Homes Run. Our 180 members seek to protect and restore Homes Run and Trips Run Watershed through stewardship, public education, and advocacy. I'm here today to speak about the proposed 2024 budget for the Park Authority.

[04:02:06] Since 2008, the county has been slowly divesting itself of funding the Park Authority to the point where the Park Authority now accounts for 0.6% of the overall general fund annually. Last year, for the first time, the Board of Supervisors acknowledged and supported a rethink of that business model to make it more equitable and sustainable. Thank you for that.

[04:02:29] In the meantime, however, the pressures on parks and stream valleys from urbanization, increased usage, more frequent and intense storms, and aggressive weeds continue to compound. We are concerned that the FY24 proposed budget does not meet FCPA's baseline needs for forestry, equity, and trash management.

[04:02:50] In the past year, Friends of Homes Run has helped to train more than 60 county residents to become tree rescuers. To do that, we've spent countless hours in eight different parks showing folks how to

identify and remove non-native vines, such as English ivy, that are killing the trees so that they can go home and do the same in their own yards and neighborhoods.

[04:03:08] If you spend any time at all in the parks, you can't unsee all the mature trees whose demise, after so many years of hanging on, is rapidly approaching. Nor am I talking just about the trees that are laden with vines. Otherwise, healthy mature trees are being undermined along stream banks that have been deeply incised and separated from the floodplains by intensive runoff.

[04:03:30] Other trees are being crowded out by bamboo and other introduced plants. Often, the understory has been diminished by deer browsing or monocultures. Forests need a healthy understory in order to regenerate. Against that backdrop, the $740,000 or so requested by the Park Authority for forestry this year was frankly a very modest ask.

[04:03:53] But it was a start because it would allow the Park Authority to take care of the worst of the worst cases of trees that are a hazard to life and limb without having to pull resources away from other parts of their budget. Instead, the county has allocated just $57,000 for forestry, or about 8% of the park authorities ask.

[04:04:12] I understand that the county and park authority have discussions to boost that amount to $500,000 as part of the third corridor review. That is fine as a one-time solution, but what's happening to trees is not a one-off. It is very obviously a long-term problem.

[04:04:28] Please stabilize this critical budget area by adding it to the Park Authority's baseline annual budget so that the Park Authority can stop having to rob Peter to pay Paul and start to move beyond tree triage. As for the trash, the Park Authority is a partner in county's zero waste plan.

[04:04:52] Additional funding is required for the Park Authority to achieve the long-term goals in the plan, but none of the requested $2.9 million was included in the budget. The Park Authority's default has been infrequent trash collection and fewer trash cans.

[04:05:08] The problem with litter is not that it's unsightly. The problem with litter is that it needs to go somewhere. That somewhere is one of three places, trash and recycling containers, which is ideal, or swept into the storm drain and streams, thereby compromising water qualities and conditions for aquatic life, or it goes into the soil, causing it to break down into microplastics that alter the soil composition, thus reducing the prevalence of organisms that play a role in the natural recycling of carbon and nitrogen. As an organization that has supported dozens of parkland cleanups

[04:05:46] over the years, involving hundreds of volunteers, we know what trash is in the stream, and we urge you to fund $500,000 toward the Park Authority's trash maintenance needs, which is far short of what FCPA requested, but would allow the Park Authority to start implementation of that zero-waste policy. Last year, and again in FY24, the Board of Supervisors gave $500,000 to help FCPA find a more sustainable funding model than constantly raising already steep fees on county recreation users. In the interim, the Park Authority has requested funding for

[04:06:25] specific programs for low-income and underserved communities, including for a mobile park, interpretation and translation services, a park ranger pilot program, and staffing. Please find a way to support at least some of these worthy asks. Finally, the Park Authority has added 100 parks and 10,000 acres over the last 30 years, and yet its percentage of the general fund steadily dropped from 3% in 1988 to only 0.6% since 2013.

[04:06:54] Please rearrange the deck chairs or do whatever you have to do to increase the Park Authority's slice of the general fund to a still modest 1%. Given climate change and development happening all around the county, we need to take better care of our natural resources so that our natural resources can take better care of us.

[04:07:13] Thank you for your attention. Thank you. And we now have Speaker 62, Maria Isabel Balavian. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and Board Supervisors.

[04:07:36] I am Maria Isabel Vallivian, the Executive Director at the ACA Child Development Center, an NAEYC-accredited early childhood program serving our community since 1967. For the last 56 years, we have built a successful public-private partnership with Fairfax County, which has gotten stronger since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[04:08:00] As you well know, ACA continues to work with Fairfax County Office for Children and is heavily involved with the Virginia Preschool Initiative, School Readiness, Child Care Assistance and Referral, Infant-Older Connection, Child Find, and Child Protective Services.

[04:08:17] We appreciate the funding allocated at these programs for this new budget cycle. At ACCA, we have seen firsthand the positive effects these services have on the lives of the neediest of young children and their families. However, the pandemic and its lingering social and economic side effects continue to have a very negative impact on the lives of young children.

[04:08:39] This is particularly true for more than 90% of our low-income children. Providing high-quality care and education for children is not a simple task. We know that when at-risk children have access to high-quality education and programs like ACA, we have more opportunities to thrive.

[04:08:59] And the impact goes beyond school readiness. Long term, it has the potential of improving physical and mental health, reduce criminality, and lower the incidence of addiction. Children who participate in programs such as ACA receive the support and the education that will change the trajectory of their lives for the positive, and they in turn will become contributing members of society.

[04:09:25] After almost three years of dealing with COVID-19 and its effects on the families and children, we as a program are starting to turn the corner. However, we're facing two very difficult challenges. First, we're confronting a serious shortage of qualified early childhood education teachers.

[04:09:44] We have lost two-thirds of our teachers since the start of the pandemic. Some have opted for better-paying jobs at Fairfax County Public Schools, and others have left the field altogether. We're having a very difficult time recruiting and retaining teaching staff.

[04:10:03] The teacher burnout rate is too high, and the situation is not getting better in spite of salary increases, improved benefits, and fully paid professional development opportunities. This leads me to my second point. Our teachers are dealing with greater levels of work-related stress.

[04:10:22] They are getting burnout, and they're exiting the early childhood field because there is an ever-growing number of young children with special needs who require significant additional support, due, in large part, to the learning and socialization delays caused by COVID-19 confinement. At ACA, more than 30% of the children that we serve have an IEP or an IFSP.

[04:10:47] This percentage does not consider the number of children who are being assessed or are in the referral process pipeline. In addition, we have children who have experienced serious trauma that is

impacting their learning and social-emotional development and require the specialized intervention. Under the Child Care and Development Block Grant, young children with diagnosed special needs are eligible for double subsidy reimbursement rates.

[04:11:13] Unfortunately, at ACA, we're having a very hard time accessing these funds and more often than not, it is simply impossible. And for us, my mother taught for two decades in Fairfax County, my younger brother was in special ed for 21 years. So like that fell through the cracks with us and we had family members that should have been able to potentially point us in that direction but we had no idea. So like I know this is easier said than done but everything that happens under this roof we think you guys have it under control and trust in you but wherever there's opportunity for you to expand out or get involved in either

[04:11:52] like organizations or advocacy to bring the whole ecosystem of where these children interact with different types of professionals or community-based services that can help bring it together so the parents have an idea that they should move in this direction.

[04:12:08] We need to find a way to avoid bureaucratic inflexibility and let this extremely needed funding reach the most vulnerable of young children. In conclusion, we will continue to advocate for services at the local, state, and federal levels, but appreciate the support you provide, which enable non-profit, community-based organizations such as ACA to improve the lives of Fairfax County residents.

[04:12:34] Thank you so much. Thank you very much. That brings us to Speaker 63, Deborah Hammer. Good afternoon. My name is Deborah Hammer, and I am Chair of the Fairfax Area Disability Services Board, or FADSB.

[04:12:53] Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the budget items that will have the greatest impact on people with physical and sensory disabilities in the Fairfax area in fiscal year 2024. Funding supports for people with disabilities to be included in the community is vital to the fabric of our county. These supports are every bit as essential to Fairfax

[04:13:18] County as our roads emergency first responder. We're going to see what happened here and for those maybe watching at home again we're on speaker 63 Deborah Hammer the chair of the Fairfax

[04:13:50] Area Disability Services Board. Mr. Chairman? Yes. I guess it's hard to say. Can you repeat that in a situation like this? It supports our every bit. There we go. Every bit is essential to Fairfax County as our roads, emergency first responders, and public schools. They are value-added programs that empower people with disabilities to live, prosper, and contribute to the community alongside

[04:14:29] non-disabled peers. According to the CDC, one in four adults live with a disability. People with disabilities are your neighbors, co-workers, loved ones, and if you live long enough, will most likely include you. That is why advocacy for people with disabilities benefits all Fairfax County residents. The FADSB applauds Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

[04:14:59] For the proposed increase in funding for the Office of Elections, the added services, technology to facilitate voting, and staff positions would greatly benefit the ability for all registered voters in Fairfax County to exercise their right to vote, including those with disabilities.

[04:15:18] A much-needed contract rate increase has been proposed for the Department of Family Services and Disability Rights and Resources. This will enable DRR to continue providing high-quality

services through its vendors, including legal assistance for people with disabilities, specialized services for people with traumatic brain injuries, and services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing for the next fiscal year.

[04:15:47] The FADSB is pleased that the Board of Supervisors is proposing a Director of Diversion, Equity, and Inclusion in the Police Department. This position will ensure support for some of our most vulnerable citizens, as well as for our police officers.

[04:16:09] It also supports Fairfax County's commitment to equity, as laid out in the One Fairfax Policy. Thank you all for your commitment to supporting the needs of Fairfax County citizens with disabilities. Thank you, Ms. Hammer, and we are on Speaker 64, Laura Martinez, Chair of the Advisory Social Services Board.

[04:16:33] My name is Laura Martinez, and I am the Chair of the Fairfax County Advisory Social Services Board, otherwise known as ASSB, which advises the Director of the Department of Family Services, DFS, to support the department in providing vital programs and services that help support vulnerable Fairfax County residents.

[04:16:56] The ASSB is very pleased with what DFS has been able to accomplish in another year marked by the lingering hardships caused by the pandemic and thanks the Board of Supervisors for their ongoing support of critical human services.

[04:17:13] We also understand that there was very little room in the 2024 fiscal year proposed budget for new or expanded initiatives, and the majority of new funding was allocated to preserve the county's core.

[04:17:29] More specifically, the ASSB appreciates the addition of $8.4 million to provide contract rate adjustments as our community human service partners struggle with inflationary and employee retention pressures and the $0.4 million added to DFS's baseline budget to support higher auxiliary grant income supplements for Social Security insurance recipients and those with disabilities.

[04:18:00] The ASSB's top concern for the 2024 fiscal year budget centers on continuing to support the county's long-term strategies and DFS's core work. Affordable housing, for example, is a significant challenge for the county.

[04:18:19] 44% of renters in our county pay more than 30% of their income on housing. Our human service agencies witness the adverse impacts that housing insecurity has on the lives of our community's most vulnerable residents every day.

[04:18:38] Affordable housing is essential to individual and family well-being. It provides stability and security, enables household budgets to accommodate other basic needs like food, transportation, and medical care, and is essential to our youngest residents feeling safe and secure so they can focus on learning and being kids.

[04:19:04] The board's recently adopted goal of creating a minimum of 10,000 affordable units by 2034, a near doubling of the baseline funding allocated to affordable housing development, are definitely steps in the right direction.

[04:19:19] along with the investments proposed in the fiscal year 2023 third quarter review for affordable housing and homelessness services. However, given the significant investments needed to make progress, we believe that action must be taken in every budget, even in times of constrained resources.

[04:19:42] Therefore, the ASSB urges the Board to consider additionally funding in the 2024 fiscal year for emergency rental assistance to expand support beyond pre-pandemic levels and, if possible, to further support the $10,000 affordable unit goal.

[04:20:03] Finally, we respectfully ask the Board to continue pursuing the racial and social equity goals advanced by the Chairman's Task Force on Equity and Opportunity. The ASSB takes seriously the recommendations advanced by the task force and we believe many of these recommendations meet the notion embedded within one Fairfax that we all do better when we all do better.

[04:20:31] We remain committed to a Fairfax County that provides all residents with the opportunity to live their best lives. Thank you so much to the Board of Supervisors for the opportunity to provide comments on the budget during this time.

[04:20:47] Have a good evening. And that brings us to Speaker No. 65, Kader Gumas. The Board of Supervisors in Fairfax County, Virginia. My name is Kader Gumas.

[04:21:03] I'm the Immigrant Community Representative to the Council to End Domestic Violence. I'm also a constituent in Fairfax County, Virginia, and unfortunately a survivor of domestic violence. I never thought 24 years ago when I moved to the United States from Germany that one day I would be standing in front of you advocating for resources to help us end domestic violence.

[04:21:30] But life happens, and so here I am. Did you know that one in four women and one in nine men are impacted by domestic violence in our communities? Chances are that you may know a victim, a survivor, or even a perpetrator who lives in your community.

[04:21:53] The safety of our communities is such a big priority to myself, my family, and my neighbors. So I am urging you to please take a stand with us and consider prioritizing funding that help us end domestic violence in Fairfax County, Virginia.

[04:22:14] We need your support. We need you to stand with us and help us bring an end to the silent pandemic that is impacting not just our community today, but the future of our community through the mental health needs of our children and the youth who are impacted by IPV and domestic violence. Please take a stand with us and remember to help prioritize funding for domestic violence resources while you're making your

[04:22:45] budget decisions today. Thank you again. And that brings us to Speaker 66, Bushra Mirza. Good evening. My name is Bushra Mirza and I'm employed as a buyer too at the Park Authority.

[04:23:04] I'm a proud union member of SEIU Virginia 512 and I'm speaking to you on my own behalf and not on behalf of the county. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here today. When I joined the county I was extremely excited and proud. The county had a reputation as an excellent place to work and for valuing its employees. Sadly I have seen more and more of my colleagues leave the county in large numbers because they can no longer either afford to live in the county or survive on the wages offered to them. I love my job but it is becoming increasingly difficult to make sure that

[04:23:41] we provide the best services possible to our customers when we do not see any appreciation or respect for our hard work reflected in our wages which should be commensurate with our efforts. When the county wants to fund the marketplace adjustment at only 2%, when it should be 5.5%, that is beyond insulting to its workforce. I have four children and I know only too well the cost of inflation, in particular

when I go grocery shopping or have to fill up my car with gas, and I'm stunned by the bill. I feel strongly it is

[04:24:16] my moral and civic responsibility to speak up on behalf of myself and my co-workers who are suffering financially due to wages not being fully funded adequately. I find it noteworthy that although the county has not fully funded the pay plan for years, yet they somehow found enough funds to boost the board of supervisors' salaries by almost 40% for the chairman's office and nearly 30% for individual supervisors, which makes the 2% raise offered for employees simply unacceptable. We cannot afford another year of county workers not having a seat at the table.

[04:24:54] We need a union contract now. Through a contract, we can work in collaboration with county leadership that will benefit the county as a whole. We are experts and have valuable insights to share. Working together to improve workplace conditions will also improve retention and attract new employees. Thank you very much. And our next speaker is Speaker 67, Melissa Heifetz. Hello, my name is Melissa Heifetz, and I'm the Executive Director for the ARC of Northern Virginia.

[04:25:34] Our organization serves all of Northern Virginia, but the vast majority of our members are Fairfax County residents. We speak with individuals with disabilities, their families, school system colleagues, provider partners, and others who touch the lives of people with developmental disabilities every day. We are all a critical part of this community, and I would like to thank the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for all you are doing to grow an inclusive community. We have enjoyed working together with you over the years to ensure that the needs of Fairfax County residents

[04:26:10] with disabilities are met. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to funding employment and day services for special education graduates. We are very pleased that the 2023 graduates will have adequate funding from within the community services board budget without additional funding needed from the proposed FY 2024 Fairfax County budget. There are several other items in the proposed Fairfax County budget that are critical to the disability community that we encourage you to fund and support. Our service system is navigating an unprecedented staffing crisis.

[04:26:50] People with disabilities are suffering as caregivers and other critical staff cannot be hired and trained fast enough as employee turnover is shockingly high. We ask you to support at a minimum the proposed 2% contract rate increase for human service providers working on county contracts. Because people with developmental disabilities continue to be overrepresented in the criminal justice system, we wholeheartedly support the funding of the new Director of Diversion,

[04:27:24] equity and inclusion within the police department. Lastly, we support proposed 5% increase for the consolidated community funding pool money, as this is wisely used to grow supports and resources most in need quickly. Thank you for all of your work on the Board of Supervisors. We look forward to working with each of you to ensure that the needs of all Fairfax County residents with developmental disabilities are met. Thank you. Thank you very much. And that brings us to Speaker 68, Jonathan Kerr. Thank you, Chairman McKay and the Board of Supervisors for the opportunity to

[04:28:04] speak with you. On behalf of the Fairfax Symphony Board of Directors and Orchestra Musicians, thank you for recognizing the vital role the FSO plays to serve our community. Today, I'm delighted to share a few highlights of what your investment has made possible over the past year. Your support enables us to make Fairfax County our stage while helping to achieve critical county priorities.

[04:28:30] The FSO helps create a vibrant economy and attracts thousands of residents and visitors to the county each year through our extensive concert programming. In October, we were thrilled to open our 65th anniversary season at Capital One Hall with renowned pianist Jeremy Denk.

[04:28:46] We were honored to have Supervisor Dalia Palchek kick off the season in her conducting debut by leading the FSO in a performance of the Star-Spangled Banner.

[04:29:12] The FSO's strategic partnerships engage our community. For the past six years, the FSO has collaborated with the Fairfax Ballet to bring the holiday classic The Nutcracker to our community. This is one of the few productions in the region to feature a live orchestra with a full ballet.

[04:29:28] These festive performances at the GMU Center for the Arts brought immense joy to thousands of families at a time when our region needed it most, still struggling under the effects of the pandemic. Education is at the heart of our mission, and the FSO's innovative Link-Up program has helped thousands of students build critical skills.

[04:29:54] In collaboration with Carnegie Hall, Link-Up increases access to this evidence-based curriculum, serving Title I schools by uniting the classroom to the concert hall. Our goal is to serve every Title I school throughout the county as we align with FCPS Portrait of a Graduate to help every student succeed beyond the classroom.

[04:30:16] I love seeing other people like they're kind of like my role model of like playing the cello and stuff. Seeing them like chase their dreams and stuff. The show was amazing. Thank you Fairfax Symphony Orchestra. Thank you Fairfax Symphony. As an artistic ambassador for our region, the FSO makes Fairfax County a leader by commissioning new work. Last month, we presented the U.S.

[04:30:48] premiere by Czech composer Sylvie Batarova. This rare double concerto written for double bass and guitar featured Aaron Clay, principal bass in both the FSO and the president's own United States Marine Band, along with Grammy Award-winning guitarist Jason Veo. The FSO's fellowship program advances Fairfax County's one Fairfax priority as we strengthened our commitment to serving university-level students from backgrounds not currently represented in the orchestra world today.

[04:31:24] With your support, we enhance career opportunities through customized mentorships with FSO musicians and encourage greater diversity in the orchestra field. Hello, my name is Brianna Proctor and I'm a fellow with the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra this season. Being a part of the FSO as a fellow means I have the privilege of attending rehearsals, receiving personal feedback from Maestro Zimmerman, participating in mock auditions, and connecting with my fellow orchestra soloists and members.

[04:31:54] Your support has enabled the Fairfax Symphony to serve our community And it is with your support, combined with the talent of our musicians, the long-held partnership with FCPS, and our deepened commitment to greater diversity, that we serve as an invaluable cultural resource and artistic ambassador for our region.

[04:32:15] Chairman McKay and the Board of Supervisors, thank you for helping make the music possible. Thank you very much, Jonathan. A good way to end. Long day of testimony. And with that, that brings us to the end of day two of our public hearing.

[04:32:36] And we will resume again tomorrow at 3 p.m. for day three. And until that time, we were in recess.