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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Budget Public Hearing, Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Date	Wednesday, April 17, 2024
Place	Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Virginia
Length	4h 46m (video)

- Official meeting video (Fairfax County): https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/3313
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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-01. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:06] Good afternoon, everyone. We are going to begin day two of our budget public hearings. And I know that Supervisor Alcorn, I see Supervisor Walkinshaw is here, is on his way from COG. So he may be a minute or two late, but he's at the Council of Governments meeting this morning representing the county.

[00:00:24] With that, as I announced, this is day two, April 17th, 2024, of budget testimony. We do have signed up tonight 73 speakers. And so if everyone could help us out, when I call your name in advance, if you can make your way down closer, there's a lot of seats up here close.

[00:00:45] Make your way down closer so that when it's your turn to testify, you are ready to go and we are ready to go. And that will help some folks later today who will be here probably late into the night. And so if we could all play a role in that, that would be appreciated. I am going to call the first couple speakers.

[00:01:03] Speaker number one is Desiree Pitts. Is Desiree Pitts here? If you could come on down. Carrie Wilson. Carrie Wilson is here. Roberta Gosling. Roberta Gosling is here. And Alex Stewart. Alex Stewart. If I called your name, if you could come down a little bit closer, we would appreciate that.

[00:01:23] And we are going to begin with speaker number one, Desiree Pitts. Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay, members of the board, and members of the staff. My name is Desiree Pitts. i'm an animal protection police second lieutenant and i'm also the fairfax county chapter secretary with the pba

although today i'm speaking as an individual and not as a representative of any group 37 years ago my passion for animals began when my grandpa introduced me to his chickens then at 13 i began volunteering with my local humane society until i went to college where i obtained a bachelor's in biology after that i worked at a state and national park having the

[00:02:00] the time of my life catching snakes and providing wildlife education programs to the public. Coming from a military and law enforcement background, my family that is, I wanted to pursue a career in a similar field. That is when I found Fairfax County. It was the perfect opportunity when I recognized that the law enforcement officers also specialize in animal welfare. 17 years later, I stand before you today advocating for something that I believe is so vital that I, as well as many others, have sacrificed time away from their friends, their families, their pets, and also taken a toll on their mental and physical health to advocate for

[00:02:39] what we truly believe is the best option for Fairfax County. In a Connect with the County Leaders podcast, our leaders in public safety, as well as County Executive Hill, expressed how important it is to make data-informed decisions. One of the reasons for the proposal to abolish Animal Protection Police is to be more like our surrounding agencies. Those other agencies are not the largest jurisdiction in Virginia. Those other agencies aren't responsible for overseeing the largest number of registered dangerous dogs in the state. Fairfax County's Animal Protection Police Unit is the same size as some of those other agencies' entire police departments.

[00:03:17] County Executive Hill once said, and I quote, we are doing it the best. Everybody looks at us. When we do our business in here in Fairfax, it is a testament to the women and men of the fire and police departments. It is about us being excellent, end quote.

[00:03:34] In Fairfax County, we are known for blazing the trail and establishing the best practices, not going backwards. I would like to ask the board, how do you hope to achieve enhancing animal services in Fairfax County? Do you form your decision based on those who have continuously modified a proposal as information countering their reasoning has consistently been brought to your attention?

[00:03:54] Or do you listen to the two dozen animal protection professionals who encounter your community and constituents throughout over 18,000 calls for service each year? Or what about your subject matter experts within APP leadership who are literally begging to simply have the opportunity to communicate with the applicable decision makers in order to work together to expand upon a respected unit?

[00:04:16] Someone once challenged us to do some self-reflection, as all of those involved have room for improvement. If the root cause of some of the challenges you've heard are based upon lack of communication, the resolution is not to abolish what these dedicated women and men consider a calling.

[00:04:34] Instead, bring each leader to the table to reestablish communication goals while maintaining APP's law enforcement status so our officers can continue to provide services to the best of their ability and their authority. Thank you, and I look forward to working together to continue enhancing the services provided to the Fairfax community.

[00:04:50] Thank you very much. Speaker number two is Carrie Wilson, who is co-chair of the Affordable Housing Council. Welcome. Thank you. It's so nice to be here today as co-chair of that council, and I bring greetings from Rip Sullivan, co-chair who wanted to be here today, but is in Richmond with his part-time

job doing what you all do every day, which is to serve the needs of Fairfax county i'm joined by many members of a hack these are representatives from your district developers people with lived experience in housing and representatives from boards authorities and

[00:05:27] commissions all of whom understand that housing is essential as an important investment for the county's economic future as well as achieving the goals of one fairfax a hack has worked as you all know i'm not just in sort of coming to you for the budget investment but also on policies that work together things like fair housing we were so pleased to work with the the board and and agency heads in creating the regional commitment to fair housing and next week the fairfax county housing actions will be showcased at a symposium and i can tell you more than ever with evictions

[00:06:06] on the rise with what I'm sure you will hear from people what they're facing in terms of their rights with zoning restrictions it's so important for us to understand how that intersects with the development and the goals that you have made supervisor harry i haven't had a chance to thoroughly review the analysis you've done on housing affordability but i would say that certainly a hack and the fcrha are positioned to discuss a lot of the issues around zoning regulatory barriers issues that i know our development community will talk about

[00:06:41] certainly contribute to the cost of housing and so what it means and i think that's great and i would urge this board to continue to use the power of your authority to help us bring private market landlords to the table to talk about what's going on the real estate community as well as as business community talk about sharing the development costs for our community coming back to the budget our prepared statement talks a lot about the need that we're saying seeing i think i'm going to leave that to the people who every day struggle to find a safe

[00:07:19] livable place to live to meet their other household expenses because that is real and it's only getting worse i think that the investments that you are making today in affordable housing preservation pay major dividends when we talk about reduction of homelessness livability revitalization of our neighborhoods increased consumer spending stabilizing our workforce and importantly i serve on the boards of two of our local chambers and the investments that we talk about there is about how preservation and development of new housing is an essential

[00:07:57] strategy for expanding our tax base increasing the investment to attract new businesses to our community job creation and overall economic development for the county so as we think about that and your overall impact and the goal that you have for attaining one fairfax a community of opportunity for all um i would say thank you we're nearly halfway to our goal of 10 000 the minimum goal of 10 000 homes that are affordable for people at the 60 percent area median income and below but that won't happen in the units in the pipeline unless we have a committed sustained

[00:08:37] commitment to fund the housing and to look at the policies that go along with that so we appreciate and support the county executive and your request for sustaining the existing commitment adding new positions and capacity so that we in in housing department and planning so that we can respond break through some of the barriers some of the challenges we see but also ask you to consider an additional investment of 16 million or another half penny of the tax for this year and additional carryover funds to get us

[00:09:15] into the pipeline and finally would ask that you include in your budget guidance the goal of reaching the two-penny goal getting back to the two-penny goal by fiscal year 2027 budget when we have

had the time to work with things I think housing is essential for our community for every person that works here and Certainly addressing the needs across the spectrum of affordability is so important, and we really want to thank you, and thank you for the privilege of serving on your advisory council

[00:09:50] and the opportunity to address issues beyond the annual budget. Thank you. Thank you very much, Carrie. Our next speaker is Roberta Gosling, to be followed by Alex Stewart and Luis Obragan.

[00:10:09] Welcome, Roberta. Thank you. Thank you very much. And good afternoon, Chairman McKay, Supervisor Alcorn, and the rest of the supervisors. I appreciate the time to be able to speak with you. I was here last year, you probably remember that, speaking on behalf of Cornerstones, and like a bad penny, I've turned up again.

[00:10:28] And I'm gonna be speaking again on behalf of Cornerstones. And I also have a position on the South Lakes PTSA food pantry as well as our rest in residence. So I'm speaking to you on behalf of each of these things. and i'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to do so first i want you to know that we truly appreciate at cornerstones the partnership that we've been able to enjoy we appreciate you all of the funding that you provided and the and the ability to really work very closely with you to address many topics many that we're working on right now and that you're all very aware of

[00:11:06] and you know that for more than 50 years cornerstones has really been focused on providing affordable housing providing helping with food insecurity providing financial assistance social services i know that and that's why really at the end of the day we understand and we know you understand the need for the the increase in the health and human services budget and the budget that you put forward that we truly truly appreciate and we hope to see sustained i understand that yesterday you had a lot of people that were

[00:11:41] opposed to the budget we're here to tell you that we support you and we support your efforts carrie earlier talked about the half penny we support the half penny carrie talked about the two cents goal for 2027 we support that i support that personally and individually i want to really just share with you why this is important and i think you know this i want to talk about three different people that i've come in contact and that we serve the first person is an 11 year old 11 year old comes to our south lakes food pantry with her parents every week she painted this she's

[00:12:20] truly gifted i wanted you to see this she's 11 years old and she's so smart her family needs her family needs the affordable housing her family needs the food security and her family needs your support you know who else needs our support when we shop at the drug store the drug store the the people that check us out they shop at our south lakes food pantry they have children at south lakes high school they need our support you know who else are these our support the bus drivers the bus drivers need our support they come through our school pantry as do the custodians

[00:12:59] they have children in the schools they can't afford to live in fairfax county they need affordable housing and last but not least we have many people that come through in fact one of our one of our uh you know one of our families comes through the husband comes through he just lost his wife at christmas and he's supporting his children and the thing that i love about him is that when he started coming through our to our food pantry and working with cornerstones he didn't speak a word of english he through the county he's been enrolled in easel

[00:13:35] classes classes that you provide that you have made possible and today he's talking to me in english and it's so much fun and i really truly appreciate all that you are doing and we at cornerstones appreciate all that you're doing and we truly support support this budget my written testimony sounds totally different than what i just said so we'll get to see all the details in there but i know that you get tired of hearing all the blah blah blah so i just wanted to share with you some of the personal stories that we see every day and i thank you excellent thank you very much roberta uh speaker number four is alex stewart to be followed by louise obregon and

[00:14:15] jackie henderson if i've called your name just make sure you're down close to the podium uh and this is alex stewart welcome good afternoon home home when you hear that word what comes to mind family laughter celebration life when we think of our idea of home one could

[00:14:47] easily associate any of those words what about dignity safety mental health physical health and well-being or human right does your idea of home include those words as well according to the urban Institute. Safe, stable, affordable housing was first recognized as a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has since been reaffirmed in many international treaties,

[00:15:22] resolutions, and declarations. We cannot forget. It is a great day to live and work in Fairfax County and what an opportunity it is to be able to stand up here and provide testimony about what's most important to our community, to the people who live and play and grow in Fairfax County every day, year after year. While I personally live in an adjacent community, I have worked with the human services system in Fairfax County since 2009, first with the Department of

[00:15:56] Family Services and now with Cornerstones, a local nonprofit in Reston. I spend a large majority of my weeks dedicated to the Opportunity Neighborhoods Initiatives in Reston and in Herndon, and as a strategy director, support the work that is driven by resident leaders, also known as neighborhood ambassadors. These leaders are the voices that I hope you'll hear through this message today.

[00:16:21] Ms. Lubna Muhammad, Reston Opportunity Neighborhood's neighborhood ambassador since 2016 and resident of Cedar Ridge Apartments in Reston, could not be here today, but wrote a statement that will be submitted in its entirety for the record that spoke to her personal lived experience. I'd like to share a piece of what she wrote quote affordable housing is not just a matter of economic necessity it is a fundamental human right every individual deserves access to safe stable and affordable housing regardless of their income level by investing in affordable housing we are investing

[00:16:59] in the future of our community ensuring that our community remains in remains a place where everyone has the opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their loved ones we will not forget. She continues to share some of her concerns about the rehabilitation of the apartment complex and fears she has at times regarding the age of the apartment, the safety of the infrastructure, and potential health hazards within the units. According to the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, dilapidated public housing can expose residents to toxins like lead, asbestos, and mold. Studies also show that poor housing conditions can harm

[00:17:37] mental health, which impacts quality of life and ability to provide for oneself and their family, something that Ms. Lubner shared was of her utmost importance. According to the EPA, buildings constructed before 1978 are most likely to contain lead-based paint, which puts the majority nationally of public housing firmly in range for the fear of contamination.

[00:18:00] The Fairfax County Capital Improvement Plan is an aspirational and visionary plan. Included within are the goals for each system, including housing, health, and human services. One of the housing development goals reads to maintain the quality of existing units in the Fairfax County Rental Program as they age to promote the stability of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

[00:18:24] According to Google, the word maintain means cause or enable a condition or state of affairs to continue. Instead, I'd like to offer the word improve, which means make or become better. This aligns with the Health and Human Services sections linked to the Comprehensive Plan, more specifically that the county should conserve stable neighborhoods and encourage the rehabilitation and other initiatives that will help to revitalize and promote the stability of older neighborhoods.

[00:18:52] It is my hope that you have heard testimony lifting up the critical importance of safe and affordable housing and that you will consider this circumstance as a basic human right. I hope that you will not forget. Thank you. Thank you Alex. Speaker number five is Luis Obregón. Welcome. Good afternoon members of the board. My name is Luis Obregón and I will be interpreting Ana Chavarria's testimony.

[00:19:50] to express the problems that many of us confronts daily. I have seen how entire families are displaced due to the constant increase of alquiler every year.

[00:20:08] No there is no funding available in any funds to come. This has led to that families separate because they can't remain together to pay the alquiler. Nos vemos obligados a buscar más trabajo solo para mantener un techo sobre nuestras cabezas.

[00:20:27] Pero el aumento de alquiler no va de la mano con el aumento de trabajos o salarios. Al final de muchos se ven obligados a dejar sus hijos solos para poder mantener un hogar. En muchas ocasiones, múltiples familias se ven obligadas a compartir un solo apartamento,

[00:20:46] Thank you.

[00:21:21] Pesticidas que se que son dañinos a nuestra salud además estas unidades a menudo carecen de mantenimiento adecuado a los medidores de luz agua son antiguos y poco confiables para solucionar estos problemas necesitamos acceso a viviendas más exigibles dentro del condado así como la oportunidad de trabajos con salarios dignos también es cruel reducciones eliminar los requisitos de ingresos mínimos para acceder a viviendas accesibles que ya muchas personas, a pesar

[00:22:00] de tener múltiples empleos, no pueden alcanzar lo mínimo exigido en las aplicaciones. Además, necesitamos más apoyo para los refugios, así como organizaciones que comprendan nuestras culturas, idiomas y creencias.

[00:22:18] Queremos estar con nuestros hijos, verlos crecer y cuidarlos. si tienen que sacrificar nuestras presencias en sus vidas debido a la lucha constante por mantener un techo sobre sus cabezas. Por último, pero no menos importante, no olviden a la gran población de personas indocumentadas que contribuyen día a día a nuestro condado, a que merecen un lugar seguro y digno donde vivir.

[00:22:48] Agradezco que se tomen en cuenta nuestra voz y se destine parte de presupuestos para mejorar Fairfax. Gracias por escuchar. Do I have time to thank you?

[00:23:07] Hello, good afternoon, distinguished members of the Fairfax County Budget Committee. My name is Ana Chavarría. I am a single grandmother taking care of my three grandchildren. I have been

living in Fairfax County for over 20 years, and I also am a neighborhood ambassador in my community. I want to express the problems that many of us face on a daily basis I have witnessed how entire families are displaced due to the constant increase in rent every year There is no assistance available, no funds to turn to This has led to families being separated because they cannot stay together to afford the rent We are forced to seek more jobs just to keep a roof over our heads But the rent increase does not go hand in hand with job or wage increases

[00:23:46] In the end, many are forced to leave their children alone in order to maintain a home Often, multiple families are forced to share a single apartment, resulting in overcrowding and a decreasing quality of life and safety. We are forced to allocate most of our monthly budget to rent, leaving little or nothing for other basic needs such as food or childcare.

[00:24:08] The problems do not end there. Affordable housing units are often plagued by insects and rodents, constantly exposing us to pesticides that are harmful to our health. Additionally, these units often lack proper maintenance, and the meters for electricity and water are old and unreliable.

[00:24:25] To address these issues, we need access to more affordable housing within the county, as well as more job opportunities with fair wages. It is also crucial to reduce or eliminate minimum income requirements for accessing affordable housing, as many people, despite having multiple jobs, cannot reach the minimum required on applications.

[00:24:42] Furthermore, we need more support for shelters as well as organizations that understand our culture, language and beliefs. We want to be with our children, see them grow and take care of them without having to sacrifice or possess in their lives due to the constant struggle to keep a roof over their heads.

[00:24:59] Last but not least, let us not forget the large population of undocumented individuals who contribute to the daily life of our county and deserve a safe and dignified place to live. I appreciate our voices being taken into account and that part of the budget is being allocated to improve Fairfax.

[00:25:16] Thank you for listening to me. Thank you very much. Thank you. Our next speaker is Jackie Henderson. And following Jackie Henderson will be Marlene Blum, Gina Marie Lynch, and Kimberly Williams, speaker number nine.

[00:25:33] If I've called your name, please come down closer to the podium. Welcome, Ms. Henderson. Thank you. I ask that you reject the change to the animal protection police as proposed by the county exec and director of the animal shelter. For the 45 years I've lived in Fairfax County, I have been an advocate for animals in need.

[00:25:49] And until very recently, I was a volunteer at our animal shelter. Even though I am no longer a volunteer, I am in no way, shape, or form a disgruntled former volunteer. It was noted by, in an email from Deputy County Exec Arnold recently, that comment was on call for.

[00:26:04] I volunteer in many other areas for our county, and I think our volunteers really make our county what it is. As I watched the January safety and security meeting proceedings, I couldn't help but look around at the APP and police officers that were around me. I am confident that they were united in one thing, and that is ensuring that the gold standard that has been set by our APP remains a gold standard.

[00:26:25] I couldn't agree more with what Chief Davis stated, that the APP officers are, quote, smart, compassionate, and empathetic, and have real vigor for what they do, believe what they do, and do a great job, end quote. Unfortunately, I also heard a lot of conflicting information and incorrect statistics at this meeting. For example, it was stated that our current APP does not allow for animals to be returned in the field. The current APP does allow for this, and all that has to be done is to issue a directive. So using this as a reason to make this change doesn't make sense to me. In fact, during the most recent URI crisis at the shelter, it was stated by management that APP would be doing its best to return animals in the field to

[00:27:03] keep the healthy animals out of the shelter to prevent more animals from becoming sick. As a resident of Centerville I live within a few hundred yards of where one of the most recent deadly dog stabbing attack occurred. I took homage in the fact that our professional APP were doing their job searching, investigating, and working tirelessly to find the person or persons who were responsible for this horrendous act. I was beyond horrified that it happened in my neighborhood, just as I was horrified years ago when Quincy, another dog in our county, was found to have been severely abused and had dozens and dozens of bones broken.

[00:27:37] The owners of this dog was brought to justice through the sheer determination of our amazing APP. I truly wonder if the outcome would have been the same if we had citizen animal control officers. And by the way, Quincy now lives an amazing life with people who love him as he was intended to be loved. These are just two examples of how our APP consistently exceed our expectations. I understand that the citizen appointed officers will not undergo the extensive training that our current sworn in officers already have, which makes me question how they will be able to maintain this level of exceptional service. I worry that without this training, something like recently happened in Arlington could happen

[00:28:16] here, where a man threatened to pull a gun on an animal control officer over an off-leash dog. I urge you to consider all the facts, not just the unsubstantiated financial figures, but most importantly, the uncompromising dedication shown by our current APP personnel.

[00:28:34] Using the dollar figures for a reason for this change should not be a determining factor. I'm almost done, I promise. We should not do this just because everyone else in the Commonwealth is doing it. Fairfax County should be setting the gold standard, not simply following what everyone else does as was stated by director courier in that january meeting animal services is a highly specialized and technical field i i perhaps what is truly needed is a better relationship between the app and the shelter director which within the well-designed fully functioning structure i urge you to consider all the facts and figures and make the most the best decision based on what is right for our county and not just what is right for a few people can i just say one last thing for 10 seconds. My whole career was

[00:29:13] spent in rooms like this. I sat over where the clerk to the board was, and I know this is a long day, and I know you have a very taxing and tiring day, so I appreciate what you do. Thank you. Thank you very much. Appreciate that. We are on speaker number seven, Marlene Blum.

[00:29:29] Speaker number seven, Marlene Blum, to be followed by Gina Lynch, Kimberly Williams, Dave Lyons. If I've called your name, please be ready to testify. Ms. Blum, welcome. Someone left a pen here. I don't know if they... it was just now just i don't want to walk off good afternoon chairman mckay members of the board i'm marlene blum chairman of the health care advisory board or ahcab our complete statement with additional details has been sent to you and is also attached to this testimony i'm here this afternoon to highlight several issues for the fiscal year 25 budget and for

[00:30:06] future budgets first i'll focus on fiscal year 25 recognizing that the county continues to face the challenges of high inflation and a tight labor market the hcab supports increases in employee compensation to help the county recruit retain and fairly compensate staff efforts to increase compensation and competitiveness are especially important for the health care workforce we also recognize that a significant amount of the responsibility for delivering programs and services lies with non-profit partners which also face the impacts of the labor market and inflation

[00:30:41] the hcab therefore strongly supports the funding for contract rate adjustments included in the advertised budget the hcab supports the increase in funding for the joanne jorgensen public health laboratory to support positions that were established as part of the fiscal year 2020 carryover review to handle the covet 19 pandemic's increased testing requirements these positions were originally funded by a state grant with the understanding that the county resources would be needed once grant funding expired the positions are essential to the identification of new and emerging public health hazards and threats looking ahead to future plans for the facility itself

[00:31:21] the hcab is pleased that the feasibility study aimed at developing options for its much needed expansion and renovation has been completed our memo provides the details about the jorgensen labs essential work and why it needs to be modernized it is it is listed in the cip as a future initiative the hcab feels strongly that this is a priority and urges the board to include it as soon as possible in a bond referendum in adopting the fiscal year 23 budget the board wisely approved an increase of 7.5 million dollars in order to staff one public health nurse in every

[00:31:58] county school aligned with the state mandated nurse to student ratio. Implementing this plan has been difficult. The national nursing shortage continues to impact the health department's ability to recruit and retain school health nurses. Given the fiscal constraints faced by the county, the HCAB agrees it is not appropriate to use limited resources for these vacant school health nurse positions. Funding must be available, however, when recruitment is successful. The HCAB recommends, therefore, that filling these positions be prioritized and that the Department of Management

[00:32:34] and Budget be directed to adjust the health department budget as needed to fully staff the school health nurse positions. Now for future funding. According to the fiscal year 25 HHS strategic allocation of resources, known as STAR, an increase of $157,000 in change was requested for an immunization specialist public health nurse, but was not included in the fiscal year 25 budget.

[00:33:02] This immunization specialist would coordinate and manage the health department's immunization program. Significant declines in childhood immunizations have been seen at local, state, and national levels, placing communities, including ours, at risk of vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, increased hospitalization due to illness, and a greater burden on strained health systems.

[00:33:26] In short, immunization saves lives, and it is one of the most cost-effective means of public health. Currently, the Health Department is managing this work via other funded positions. However, the Health Care Advisory Board feels that it is a critical position and should receive permanent funding.

[00:33:44] According to the fiscal year 25-star plan, an increase of $330,000 and change for two positions to continue expanding the health department's epidemiological capacity was requested but not included in the advertised budget. The HCAB is glad that the county executive has projected funding for these new positions in fiscal year 26.

[00:34:06] The plan is to embed one of the 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.

[00:34:33] The HCAB supports the funding for these two new positions, which were also included last year in the Fiscal Year 24-Star Plan and the County Executive's multi-year budget. glad to see the continuing interest in expanding epidemiological capacity that's the good news the bad news is that once again the funding is not in the budget the hcb hopes that the plan for the embedded epidemiologists can be implemented in fiscal year 26 if not sooner thank you very much thank you very much marlene appreciate that speaker number eight is uh gina marie lynch

[00:35:10] chairperson of the animal services advisory commission following gina will be kimberly Williams, Dave Lyons, and Greg Coscadden. If I've called your name, please be ready to testify. Gina, welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon. Thank you very much for allowing us to come and talk to you about the consolidation of the animal shelter. And I'm here to tell you that the ASAC strongly supports this consolidation. Many of us have spent years, even decades, aware of the many attempts by the county to locate all animal services under an appropriate structure. The chief of police had said it best, law enforcement should focus on enforcing the law, the shelter should focus on animal issues.

[00:35:50] It's best when one organization has a full array of services that can be utilized for more directed, holistic, long-term assistance for citizen problems. Having split priorities is never productive, effective, efficient use of valuable resources.

[00:36:06] There will be those that argue that the change is not necessary and everything should remain the same, and that any change will be disruptive to the community and harm animals. Yet Alexandria, Arlington, Loudoun, Prince William, Montgomery County, and most cities nationwide provide great service to the citizens using the consolidated structure for decades without the conflict and challenges we have experienced here.

[00:36:30] The National Animal Control Association stated that a consolidated approach works best in helping animals. Best Friends Shelter Liaison Manager who assists shelters and animal control officers nationwide stated that not a single animal shelter in the United States is going towards a model of animal care that we currently have.

[00:36:51] The Humane Society of the United States, the largest animal welfare organization in the entire world, supports the Fairfax County move into consolidated model. There's been some questions raised concerning the handling of wildlife under the consolidation. The Wildlife Center of Virginia, the premier wildlife center and training facility in Virginia and throughout the U.S., supports the consolidation. The Wildlife Rescue League in Fairfax handles practically all wildlife calls from the public, and they support the consolidation. Only 9% of wildlife that is picked up by our officers are taken to rehabbers. In

[00:37:28] Loudoun, 30% are. In Arlington, 60% are. Euthanasia in Fairfax for wildlife is far higher than in Loudoun or Arlington. That needs to change. Both the Wildlife Center of Virginia and the Wildlife Rescue League are committed to work closely with our shelter to explore ways to better help injured wildlife and to serve in advisory capacity in a new group that will be formed to ensure our county is embracing best practices.

[00:37:55] It's unfortunate that a lot of misinformation has been shared with the public in the wildlife community that has resulted in unnecessary fear of the consolidation. Animals will continue to be cared for. The community will continue to be served. What will change is a more unified, effective, streamlined approach to helping the community with their unique animal issues and the families that desperately need assistance.

[00:38:19] A better team approach will be instilled in every member of the shelter instead of opposition and divisiveness. Our officers will continue to do good things for the community, no doubt, and will have the opportunity to broaden their professional careers with new skill sets and promotion potential.

[00:38:37] As you know, there is an increase in pleas for assistance from our families and creative approaches must be implemented to satisfy this need. Change is that time is uncomfortable and not sought after by its own. But when the needs of the county necessitate it, we must ensure that we look for ways to help the most vulnerable of our citizens.

[00:38:57] There are significant benefits to the consolidation model of providing services. adapting our ways of serving the public needs to be paramount to a county that values its families and pets. As Robert F. Kennedy said, some men see things as they were and say why. I see things that never were and ask why not. Why not change to improve? Why not make Fairfax better? Why not look to national organizations that recommend improvements? And why not understand that stagnation is not progress why keep keeping the keep kicking the can down

[00:39:32] the road isn't a time to accept the fact that the numerous past choices have not worked the problems between the animal shelter and the animal protection police span decades and have continued regardless of different leaders on both the police and shelter side there isn't a communications challenge this is a structural problem that we finally have the opportunity to fix so that our shelter can expand the reach into the neediest parts of the county. We've been trying for over 20 years to do this. This is our time to acknowledge that we need to change and provide a better life for animals where everyone is helped. The

[00:40:10] needs of the community are great and you all have the ability to make their hopes and dreams come true. Consolidation will advance the manner in which the community is served and our precious pets are helped. As always we We thank you for the support you have provided to the outstanding animal shelters in our county and our phenomenal director, Risa Courier.

[00:40:31] Thank you. Thank you very much, Gina. Speaker number nine is Kimberly Williams, to be followed by Dave Lyons, Greg Couskadon, Patrick Booth. If I called your name, please be ready to testify. Kimberly, welcome. Thank you.

[00:40:46] Gina, I could not have said it any better, and you'll be happy to know this is my speech on two small index cards so i don't think i'll take my full five minutes um i too have been a member of fairfax county for over 60 years i'll just leave it at that in springfield um and um spent my whole life here i've seen tremendous changes as we all have um i spent my career at inova health systems uh i was on the management team bless you um and we used the fairfax county

[00:41:19] Police Department, probably on a daily basis. I have the utmost respect for them. I unfortunately saw often on a daily basis the things that they had to deal with at Fairfax where I was and they just do an incredible job. Since retiring, I have spent probably every waking hour in the last five years

working on animal welfare. I've always had a passion for it and it's just something that gets me up in the morning. When Risa mentioned to me that this was happening, I asked to speak

[00:41:56] because I have worked with multiple organizations across the state of Virginia. I've sat on the board of Lost Dog and Cat Rescue, and I do a lot with the Arlington County, and I actually work with their animal control officers quite frequently. I got to thinking that everybody wants a pet and unlike when we want a car we have to get a driver's license pretty much anyone can get a pet and there lies the problem we have people that unfortunately don't always know what they're doing and in rescue we do

[00:42:33] our best to get people to understand this is how you don't have your dog bark this is how a dog doesn't get out this is how you put on a collar this is how you put on what have you to keep your dog safe. And working with animal control officers has been invaluable for our shelters.

[00:42:54] Every organization in the state of Virginia that I've worked with, the ability for that person to work with the person that has adopted this animal, they have formed a relationship, there's no fear.

[00:43:10] They really look at the animal control officer as almost like a guidance counselor you know how do i go about keeping my dog safe how do i go about having my dog not bark its head off and annoy all the neighbors so i think i'd like to end by saying that i actually own a dog that was part of the biggest court case in washington dc fortunately the person went to jail for a very long time it was the largest case my dog is now 12

[00:43:46] and she's doing quite well but i worked with the animal control officer in washington dc and it was the best experience i've had he helped prosecute along with the police and it was very successful and i'd like to be able to follow that model that the other counties and the district is following thank you so much for your time thank you speaker number 10 is uh dave lyons and the speakers 11 12 and 13 could be ready

[00:44:19] to testify come on down closer we'd appreciate that uh welcome welcome and good afternoon mr chairman mr county executive and distinguished members of the board i'm dave lyons from the fairfax workers coalition and i'd like to talk to you tonight about what's going on with pay in the county as yogi bear would say to us it's deja vu all over again once again a market rate adjustment has been calculated in the county says as of now they can't pay it i know every year we come here and i'm always telling you how how long i've been here and i know you're tired of hearing

[00:44:59] it well it's old to me too i know every year we ask for things to be done differently it's time to change our pay system since 2000 when we went to the ill-advised pay for performance system the The system has been off kilter and it promotes inequity in pay.

[00:45:19] I was in the fire department when we vocally stood and opposed public safety going to off the step system. And the result is today, ironically, that it was much easier for you and staff to calculate the raises in the collective bargaining agreements because of the step pay system.

[00:45:39] I can't even imagine what that would look like with the current county pay system and the variances in pay. So the change in 2009 allowed the county more flexibility. But with the subsequent freezes over the last 15 years and short change raises like the one proposed, the pay inequity gap grows larger.

[00:46:01] With COVID and the rush to fill vacancies, it got even worse as new employees were hired at the mid-range, while many county workers stayed at the lower part of their scales. So the county recognized this and attempted a pay compression program, but it was done unequally, and quite honestly, no one understood it or the formula used.

[00:46:24] This year's proposal, to me, perpetuates the cycle. We will never end pay in equity until we do something different, something that goes beyond just paying the full MRA. Now, let's be clear. You need to pay the full MRA because it's your number, it's your promise, and you should pay it.

[00:46:44] You calculated it, and we're hopeful that you will. But as we learned last year, just paying the full MRA isn't enough. It really didn't do that much to stop attrition. It didn't change a lot of the trends that we saw in the county. It was appreciated, but it was certainly not enough.

[00:47:03] Our pay system, number one, needs to be transparent. It's not. What kind of county is it when we don't really know year to year how we're paid or why we're paid or how we calculate the MRA? The average employee has no idea how that's done.

[00:47:18] It's time to move on to the MRA and go to a public index system that represents better the true cost of living. Secondly, I think we need to get off the scales we're on and go back to a step system because that is clear.

[00:47:36] If you go in a firehouse or a police station, their pay is right on the wall. They all know. It's transparent. They know one year to the next they can plan their careers. You cannot do that with the system we have. Next, we need to put together a paid compensation fund that guarantees that we're going to pay the minimum every year at least.

[00:47:59] If we keep doing what you're doing, it's going to keep failing. Such a plan fits in perfectly with three-year collective bargaining contracts. And maybe we could stop this false dichotomy of pitting employees against citizens where residents are thinking raises for employee means more taxes.

[00:48:19] That's just wrong, and it's not even true if it's done right. So that's something we need to move away from. And for the life of me, I cannot understand, with the arrival of CBAs and the potential for 11,000-plus general county employees to be covered by contracts, why we haven't made a move towards changing this.

[00:48:44] It's time to reform this pay system for the good of everyone in our future. I'd like to close, and I want to note two of our speakers at Family Emergencies, Pat Booth and Adam Stewart, so they're not going to be here this evening. So if you'll indulge me if I run a little over. In this budget, there are several items that need to be addressed.

[00:49:04] One is the proposal to reduce the number of vehicle technicians, civilian vehicle technicians in the police department, from 10 to 5. That would be disastrous. I can't understand this. If you don't know, these vehicle techs are not just working on the vehicles.

[00:49:20] They are responsible for the body cams, for all the IT and tech that police officers carry. We need to, you know, that would harm the safety of officers. Dave, did you say Patrick Booth and Adam Stewart were not going to?

[00:49:36] Yes, sir, I should have told you that. So if you want to just continue, I'm happy to yield you their time. I notified the clerk of the board, but it was pretty late when I... Okay, you can continue. Well, thank

you, sir. So that's one thing that needs to be addressed. We are talking about every time an officer needs to remove his gun, there's a magnet sensor there.

[00:49:56] They work on that. The techs over there are telling me they're behind in servicing body cams. This is a danger, and to reduce them from 10 to 5 is just crazy. I also want to go on record in support of the PA, we are not in favor of the consolidation in the Animal Control Division, which affects many of our civilian members, too.

[00:50:16] I also want to point out there is a continued need to help workers in SAC who were deprived of the ability to use a fund, a grant that could have helped their salaries. We're still losing those folks. We need the juvenile courts, as you'll hear shortly, have concerns with safety and staffing.

[00:50:35] You're going to hear from a probation officer there. In public works, we are still losing jobs to contractors. We've lost yard waste. We've lost many services. The majority of laborers there are contract employees. These are good jobs for people that need them the most and provide a pension, and we cannot keep contracting out when we can't do something.

[00:50:58] We need to come up with another solution. Finally, and thank you again, I would like to talk about the human service workers are continuing to leave. We need to put an end to that. We need to come up with a program that will help us retain and expand our human service needs in a time where the need grows ever greater.

[00:51:22] Now, anyone can stand outside and just yell for the full MRA. I think what we're facing is far more complicated than that. And we have to do something different than what we do year after year. It's time to change this whole dynamic and start thinking about how to build a better future for Fairfax employees and the citizens.

[00:51:42] and just stop lurching from year to year. If anyone can do it, it's Fairfax. Fairfax can change. It has the ability to do it and the people that can make it happen. So we ask you to let's work together to make this county what we all want it to be and make our pay system transparent, fair, and fully funded.

[00:52:04] Thank you. Thank you, David. Speaker number 11. Speaker number 11 is Greg Cuscotton, and he will be followed by speaker 13 ava marie connealy and speaker 15 renee greeby if you can all be uh ready you will be on deck uh welcome greg good afternoon thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak my name is greg course cadden and i am a current fairfax county employee i joined the county in 2002 and i will be retiring next may or this coming may next month

[00:52:42] I'm also a former Fairfax County citizen for over 50 years, prior to moving to another jurisdiction two years ago. Over the years, I have learned that this board, I've heard this board boast as to how great the Fairfax County employees are. You're absolutely right, we are.

[00:53:00] I've worked on fire arrest equipment since 2003. We have continued to work through the years of irresponsible financial mismanagement and mismanagement in general of the county. For the employees that were hired in 2008 or earlier, we have been through nine years of no salary increases or less than fair increases for those two years being the years of the pandemic.

[00:53:24] Employees hired after 2008 have accumulated years with the same treatment. Through those years, it was thought that one day there would be fair increases made. That thought was removed the day

this board promoted and approved their salary increase. That end salary increase was based on eight years of no increases, with two of those being the years of the pandemic.

[00:53:47] This goes to the question as to why this board received a salary increase during the pandemic years, while no salary increases or less than fair increases were approved for any other employees during those years. At the same point, this question of ethics or conduct should have been entered into the discussion prior to the approval of this salary increase.

[00:54:10] Over the years, the lack of realistic salary and stagnated salary increases has caused employees to find employment elsewhere or retire. Due to this dilemma, the hiring of new employees could not be achieved. While there have been efforts made over the last two years to increase the salaries for employees, the main focus has been on hiring of new employees while remaining employees while irling in their wages.

[00:54:36] It is evident to those in the understaffed, underpaid, and most overworked environments that the county has chosen a path that will take years to recover from. It has become abundantly clear that the citizens of Fairfax County may not be aware of the severity or urgency in this matter.

[00:54:56] And there is a need for legitimate support from an outside source to ensure employees are protected not only in their wages, but in their employment as well. In closing, I would like to say this. No one can deny this board should have received a fair salary increase. It would have been received had it been in a different approach. And no one can deny this board has a tough job. Not only do you represent the citizens of Fairfax County, but you represent the employees as well. That being said, we represent the citizens of Fairfax County. We work for the citizens of Fairfax County, not for the Board of Supervisors. Thank you.

[00:55:33] Thank you. Speaker number 13 is Ava Marie Keneally. Welcome. Thank you, sir. Good afternoon. I'm Ava Marie Keneally. I'm a juvenile parole officer with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court.

[00:55:50] I've worked in this field for over 18 years. In my career, I've never seen a situation like we have now in Fairfax County. Every day, I work with juvenile offenders under the age of 21 years old, many of whom have been adjudicated on violent felony offenses.

[00:56:07] In the struggle to help these kids turn their lives around, we are understaffed and overwhelmed. We need better support, better training, better protection, and a fair wage for what we do. Our safety is at risk every day.

[00:56:24] We are part of the courts, but we do not have the protections afforded to law enforcement. We lack policy, training, and the staff to safely move juveniles from one location to another. At times, we are asked to escort violent offenders without adequate protection or training.

[00:56:41] At times, we are confronted with gang violence, aggression, exposed to fentanyl, and we are often conducting home visits where we know firearms are likely present. Our staffing has suffered. Many veteran POs have left the county for other departments or left the field altogether.

[00:57:01] Most of our field probation officers are new with limited or no experience. People who do this job, we're not doing it to be rich. We do it because we are dedicated to helping kids, to help them stay out of jail and prison with the hope that they can change their lives.

[00:57:19] But our safety matters. We need funding for enhanced protections. We need experienced staff. We need solid policy, real training, and the staff to protect each other. We need management that appreciates us. We need to be paid a fair wage for what we do.

[00:57:37] Many of us work overtime, drive long distances to see our clients, and dedicate ourselves to helping the kids we can help. But it's hard to do when you don't have the same protections that others do when dealing with violent offenders. Fairfax County was once the top place to work. No longer.

[00:57:55] I don't know any veteran JDRDC probation officer that isn't looking for other work or waiting just to retire. When I hear that we will continue the present course and I hear no concern from our leaders, including this board, about the challenges we face in working with juvenile crime, I worry for the future of this county and its children.

[00:58:19] Let's start to change this. Let's protect our juvenile probation and parole officers and provide them with the safety they deserve. Let's not be miserly with fair pay. If we don't, quality staff will continue to leave, services will continue to erode, and most of all, our children and community will suffer.

[00:58:38] Thank you all for your time. Thank you. Speaker number 15 is Renee Grebe, who will be followed by Lucy Biednell, Joy Bryan, and Herbert Kemp. If I called your name, make sure you're ready to testify.

[00:58:55] Welcome, Renee. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and the Board of Supervisors. I'm Renee Griebe. I'm a Fairfax County resident and also the Northern Virginia Conservation Advocate for Nature Forward. We've submitted a more robust set of written comments in conjunction with our 18 other partners of the Fairfax Healthy Communities Network, which I co-chair, and I will highlight some of those today.

[00:59:16] But before I do, I want to acknowledge that this is a tight budget year. Thank you to the county executive for the following, and we ask the board to support these proposals. For climate, thank you for sustained funding of OEEC. This office is the keystone for all others as we try to ensure that Fairfax County achieves a sustainable future.

[00:59:34] For parks, thank you for avoiding cuts to the park authority. We also really appreciate the extra funds for forestry, invasives, zero waste, and the Mobile Nature Center. For transportation, thank you for increasing funding for both Metro and Fairfax Connector and for funding park maintenance, park trail maintenance as well. We need those smart investments in non-car transportation.

[00:59:59] For housing, thank you for including five additional positions to support housing and the proposed contract rate increases for health and human services providers. Housing policy is climate policy. As we look forward to FY26 and the budget guidance that the board could provide, I encourage each of you to think hard about what seeds we need to plant today in order to grow and achieve what we said we would achieve.

[01:00:22] The current climate crisis is affecting us and will continue to affect how healthy and resilient our county is. At the February Environmental Committee meeting, the board got an update on CCAP, our climate plan. And while the words were upbeat, I was startled to see that of the nine example goals that were displayed, we're behind on two-thirds of them.

[01:00:42] We're behind on where we should be if progress was in a straight line. Progress will not be in a straight line. Cutting emissions, finding more areas to plant trees, these types of things will get harder over time as the low-hanging fruit is snatched up. And if we're behind on so many goals now, I have strong concerns about where we're going.

[01:00:59] We must be investing in ways that Fairfax County can be a place that people want to live now and in the future. And so while Nature Forward is, at our core, an organization that inspires residents to appreciate, understand, and protect our natural environment, we also acknowledge that the broader issues must be addressed to help achieve the goals and address the climate crisis.

[01:01:21] So I have four asks today for you to consider for FY26 budget guidance. First, continue to invest the funding needed to tackle the climate crisis. We have just six years to reach the CCAP goal of reducing emissions by 50% by 2030, and we are behind.

[01:01:37] And we appreciate all the county has done to address your emissions, but from the private sector, we need more. And for the county to do everything in their power to make that happen, such as addressing data centers. Resilient Fairfax support is also critical to the impacts of climate change, because that's going to fall most heavily on the people who are most vulnerable in our county.

[01:01:57] Second, provide additional and sustained local investment for affordable housing. We heard a lot about that already today. As I mentioned, housing policy is climate policy. We continue to ask that you prioritize funding for the Board's affordable housing commitments, including the equivalent of two pennies on the $100 tax rate for housing needs.

[01:02:16] Third, prioritize investments that result in walkable, bikeable communities. The Board's recent commitment of $100 million for active transportation projects over six years is wonderful. We ask you and can encourage you to provide dedicated funding to help make those kind of projects sustainably spec'd out in the future. And the board's endorsement of the Safe Streets for All policy nearly two years ago was a good step forward, but it remains unfunded. So our active transportation networks must be safe and available to all, but this is going to take funding for both staffing and implementation. And fourth and finally, please support a more equitable and sustainable funding model for the Fairfax County Park Authority.

[01:02:55] Per capita, we spend significantly less on parks than the vast majority of our neighboring Virginia jurisdictions. Stewarding 24,000 acres in the best way to support our climate goals and healthy communities takes funding, particularly for forestry and fighting invasive plants like vines that strangle and kill our trees.

[01:03:13] FCPA presented their equity study and recommendations to the board this January. And shifting to a funding model that exemplifies our one Fairfax policy will take time and money. Our April 15th joint Fairfax Healthy Communities letter lays out the details for those asks above.

[01:03:29] And these span many facets of the county because all of them are really important to support a healthy and resilient Fairfax County. Thank you for your time today and your consideration of our comments. Thank you. Speaker number 16 is Lucy Bede now, to be followed by Joy Bryan, Herbert Kemp, and Jill Norcross.

[01:03:50] Please be ready. We're on speaker number 16. Welcome. Good afternoon, supervisors. As so many of you know, I'm Lucy Biednell with the Arc of Northern Virginia. We're a Fairfax-based nonprofit

that's been here for 62 years helping people with developmental disabilities and their families have a great life.

[01:04:08] I wanted to say we have loved partnering with Fairfax County on a range of policies, programs, and initiatives in recent years that have made Fairfax a leader in how residents with disabilities can truly be included in their communities. We wanted to voice our support for the proposed budget overall today, which we know represents a tremendous amount of effort in a very tough fiscal environment.

[01:04:30] Specifically, we wanted to call out support for five proposals. First, an increase in the contract rate services for our disability service providers. They do very difficult work in a field where attracting and retaining quality staff is critical and incredibly challenging.

[01:04:47] We know this proposal will help them meet that need. Second, we also support the seven new proposed support coordinators for the Fairfax CAO. to help individuals access DD Waiver services. We're thrilled the General Assembly is stepping up to the plate and funding the Priority One part of the DD Waiver waiting list, but we realize this is going to be an increase in need for professionals to help people with disabilities use those services.

[01:05:14] Third, we support the proposed CCFP increase of $0.64 million in the next funding cycle. We see how our partners in the community strategically use these dollars to plug holes in Fairfax County, And selfishly, so does the Arc of Northern Virginia. Fourth, we're in favor of the five new positions proposed in the Affordable Housing Office.

[01:05:34] We know our population in particular heavily relies on affordable housing and need lots of staff time and accommodations to effectively access those funds. And fifth, we're pleased to see the budget is ensuring adult day health care programs continue to provide scholarships for anyone not able to pay the private pay day rates as those rise.

[01:05:54] as the DD community is finally being able to live long enough to retire. We know we're headed there. Thank you again for the time and energy of each of you and your staffs and all that you've put into this budget. We look forward to continuing to make Fairfax County the place to be for people with disabilities.

[01:06:10] Thank you. Speaker number 17 is Joy Bryan to be followed by Herbert Kemp, Jill Norcross, and Hannah. I'm sorry, that's a call in number 20. We're on speaker 17. Joy, welcome.

[01:06:26] Hello. 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. We support Fairfax County's continued efforts to address the opioid crisis. Addressing the opioid epidemic is a long-standing priority in Fairfax County.

[01:06:44] Since 2017, when the Board of Supervisors first requested a plan to respond to the epidemic and the Opioid and Substance Use Task Force was established, Substantial progress has been made to enhance county resources and services for individuals impacted by opioid use.

[01:07:01] Notable achievements include increased availability of an awareness of drug storage and disposal options, a significant reduction in wait times for residential treatment, expansion of treatment and peer support options, establishment of a drug treatment docket, and jail-based medication for an opioid use disorder program.

[01:07:20] Although a substantial reduction in fatal opioid overdoses in the Fairfax Health District occurred between 2017 and 2019, these downward trends did not continue in 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic. Fentanyl, a type of opioid, is involved in more deaths of Americans under 50 than any other cause of death, including heart disease, cancer, and other accidents.

[01:07:43] Similar to national and statewide trends, most fatal overdoses in Fairfax County in recent years have involved fentanyl. According to a dashboard available on Fairfax County's website in the Fairfax Health District, as of March 31, 2024, there have been 75 non-fatal opioid overdoses in 2024 and 383 non-fatal overdoses in the last 12 months.

[01:08:09] As of September 30, 2023, for which the most recent information is available, there have been 89 fatal overdoses in 2023 and 113 fatal opioid overdoses for the last four quarters.

[01:08:25] We applaud the county's opioid response plan for FY23 through 25, which identifies 40 opioid-related programs and activities that will continue or be initiated, all which have the common goals of reducing deaths from opioids, improving the quality of life of individuals affected by opioid use disorder, and using data to describe the problem, target and improve interventions, and evaluate effectiveness.

[01:08:51] According to the response plan, programs and activities are being evaluated and strengthened across six priority areas, education and prevention, early intervention and treatment, monitoring, criminal justice and enforcement, harm reduction and recovery. We especially note that the CSB's Fairfax Detoxification Center provides short-term residential detox services for individuals who need help to safely detox from the effects of opioids and other substances.

[01:09:20] In addition, the CSB operates four facilities that provide intermediate and long-term comprehensive residential substance use disorder treatment. Furthermore, the clinic at the Sharon Boulevard Center for Community Health provides medication-assisted treatment, a highly effective FDA-approved treatment that significantly increases an individual's likelihood of success in recovery.

[01:09:42] In addition to the programs and services identified in the county's response plan, as of March 1st, 2024, Fairfax County is using opioid settlement funds to advance a total of eight projects. As you know, several years ago, states and localities across the country, including Fairfax County, sued numerous organizations in the pharmaceutical supply chain for their role in the opioid epidemic. Although some of this litigation is still pending, some matters have been settled and payments to states and localities have begun. Fairfax is using its settlement funds to advance projects that collectively reflect the multi-pronged cross-systems approach that guides the county's opioid response.

[01:10:22] In addition to a Northern Virginia Regional Partnership Project, other projects include the Fairfax Drug Court, Young Adult Tract Expansion, the impact of jail-based medication for opioid use disorder, and a post-release overdose and recidivism study, behavioral health services for individuals with opioid use disorders, and the adult detention center, a temporary staffing nurse practitioner to prescribe jail-based medication and chronic care treatment in the adult detention center, a prevention campaign, community dialogue sessions to identify and address the root causes of youth substance use, and youth medication-assisted treatment expansion.

[01:11:02] We commend the county for the robust response to the opioid crisis and encourage this response to continue in the future. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 18 is Herbert Kemp. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[01:11:21] I'm Dr. Herb Kemp, and I'm also the vice chair of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board. So we note that the county proposes to provide increased funding for additional probation counselors within the safety and security budget.

[01:11:39] The proposed increase of $0.53 million would fund an additional four FTE positions, and that would increase the total budget line item to $1.27 million. Probation counselors are responsible for preparing cases for court detention hearings, testifying in court, and submitting outcome recommendations to the judges.

[01:12:00] In addition, counselors update and maintain the Balanced Approach Data Gathering, Badge Case, Management Database, and may be required to serve as backup intake officers at field units at various locations throughout Fairfax County. The proposed increase in funds are included to support the Court Services Division of Fairfax County General District Court.

[01:12:22] Additional probation councillors are needed to address the growing number of non-violent offenders experiencing a mental health crisis who are being diverted from incarceration to treatment. The funds would provide for public safety and judicial administration and primarily support the county's work toward achieving goals in the safety and security community outcome area.

[01:12:45] The Criminal Justice Advisor Board supports the increase in funds for additional probation councillors. Thank you for your attention today. Thank you very much. Speaker number 19 is Jill Norcross. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[01:13:08] My name is Jill Norcross, and I'm representing the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance. And I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of an increase in funding for affordable housing, primarily as a representative of a regional organization working to meet the diverse housing needs of Northern Virginia residents, but also as a member of the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and a Fairfax County resident in the Hunter Mill District.

[01:13:32] First, I'd like to acknowledge the progress made to increase production and preservation of affordable housing in our community. Thank you, Board of Supervisors. It has been truly wonderful to see many of you at the flurry of grand openings we have had. I think by my count, that's been about eight new and preserved communities over the past 18 months, which is amazing.

[01:13:51] And we are fortunate in Fairfax County to have more in the pipeline as we work toward your goal of at least 10,000 new affordable housing units by 2034. Now is not the time to take our foot off the gas. Finally, at last, Fairfax County is being recognized as a regional and national leader using best practices and powerful financing tools through the FCRHA.

[01:14:13] We have been able to get here through baseline funding of one cent of the tax rate for affordable housing and additional funding through your add-on packages and quarterly reviews, which we are incredibly grateful and are very helpful, so thank you. we also appreciate support in this current budget for the five additional positions in the department of housing and community development we work closely with the hcd team and they are doing an incredible job but are understaffed for the required work ahead through our collective progress we have demonstrated that affordable housing is both economic development and equitable development fairfax county one fairfax policy dictates that we must consider

[01:14:52] equity when we determine budgets the budget process is where our county's priorities are reflected and we should ensure that budget requests contribute to advancing equity and reducing disparities and outcomes for all residents affordable housing is an important initiative for reducing these disparities that exist in our otherwise wealthy community and along with housing we need to ensure there are sufficient wraparound services for lower income residents the funding for these services provided by many of our nonprofit partners are a critical component of the equitable development.

[01:15:24] When we talk about equity, I like to think of myself and my own young family moving to Fairfax County 20 years ago. We were able to purchase a single-family home in a neighborhood with great schools at a reasonable price that allowed us to pay our other expenses and then some. We continue to have a relatively stable housing payment thanks to our mortgage at a low interest rate, a monthly housing payment that today would not pay the rent for a new one-bedroom apartment in our same community. Our lack of housing supply and shortage of affordable housing makes me worried about who we're leaving behind. Who are our lower wage workers struggling today?

[01:16:01] Who are the residents who have been educated by our outstanding schools who are moving away? And who are those not moving here to fill our many job vacancies? All because of our high housing cost. I understand that addressing everyone's needs comes at the cost of a higher real estate taxes i'm grateful for our county programs who support real estate tax relief for low-income seniors because we do need to keep people stably housed however fairfax county has not raised the tax rate in six years over the past several years many homeowners in our community have seen higher taxes because the values of their homes have appreciated like myself we will benefit from

[01:16:38] higher sales prices when we sell our homes i understand my homeownership experience is not universal but it's certainly not unique i believe the taxes we pay are an excellent value for the amenities we receive and i therefore support the full tax increase not only to support affordable housing permanent supportive housing and human services but other priority investments in smart growth transportation in the environment navaja has been proud to work with our fairfax healthy communities partners the naacp cornerstones and tenants and workers united in our collective advocacy and we stand with our other ahac members in support of a fy25 increase in the baseline

[01:17:17] budget of another half penny or an additional one 16.5 million one five million in fy 2025 as we await the two cents on the tax rate by fy 2027. these local contributions of our tax dollars are loans they are not grants and they leverage five seven ten times state and national funding sources. This is how affordable housing gets built, not only here in Fairfax, but across the region and other high-cost areas across the country. This is an important investment you're making in our community, and I'm grateful. So thank you for your time and consideration. The budget is

[01:17:55] such an important part of the work that you do, and we're grateful to share our feedback. I know you have hard decisions to make, but please don't make cuts that will slow the progress we are making on our affordable housing and our One Fairfax policy goals. Thank you. Thank you. Do we have speaker number 20 on the line. Okay. Hannah, can you hear me? I can hear you. Okay. Welcome. The floor is yours. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity. My name is Hannah Matuda and I

[01:18:28] would like to take a few moments of your time to talk a little bit about my experiences. I was raised by an incredible single mother who sacrificed so much to follow the American dream. But sometimes dreams can be difficult to reach.

[01:18:45] When I immigrated here and finished high school, despite my mother's resilience and hard work, the prospect of affording my dream university was out of reach, especially on her housekeeper salary. But while juggling a retail job, I attended community college and got my associate's degree.

[01:19:04] Typically, the next step is to transfer to a four-year university, but financial challenges forced me to take a break from college and work full-time. What started as a temporary hiatus turned into four years. Five years ago, determined to continue my education, I began attending George Mason University.

[01:19:24] I was living in Loudoun County at a time, and without a car, I relied on buses, spending two to three hours commuting each day. This really wasn't sustainable. Relocating to Fairfax County seemed like a solution, but all market-free apartments were financially unaffordable.

[01:19:42] Fortunately, I discovered an accessory dwelling unit for rent just minutes away from Mason. Although it didn't have a kitchen or laundry, it provided an affordable place to call home. Without this affordable housing option, my achievements over the past three years wouldn't have been possible.

[01:20:01] In 2021, I became a first-generation university graduate. In 2022, I completed an internship, and while my journey didn't start with my dream university, it led me to my dream job today as the Director of Policy and Program at the Northern Virginia Affordable Housing Alliance, advocating for more affordable housing.

[01:20:22] This is just one story out of the many with likely far more challenging circumstances. Rents, evictions, and homelessness are on the rise. And while I applaud the county's contributions in affordable housing, using public land for public good, as well as excellent initiatives like ALU and WDU, I believe we can do more.

[01:20:45] Today, I urge you to prioritize affordable housing in this year's budget by allocating an additional half penny in the baseline budget, totaling $16.15 million. This ensures that the county will have the necessary funds to do its housing goals and support local investments and projects coming through the affordable housing pipeline.

[01:21:07] Affordable housing isn't just an economic development investment. It's an investment in people like me, and it's about creating the conditions for individuals and families to thrive. Thank you for your time and service. Thank you very much.

[01:21:22] We are now going to move on to speaker number 21. I'm going to call a couple names. If you could come on down close so that you're ready to testify. Speaker number 21 is Jennifer Ives. Is Jennifer here? To be followed by Brenna Diamantes and then Melissa Landiverde and Kathy Cole.

[01:21:43] If you could be ready to testify, we will go in that order. Ms. Ives, welcome. I'm Jennifer Ives. I'm a special education teacher at Madison High School. I'm speaking to you today in support of the Fairfax County School Board's budget with a focus on teacher recruitment and retention.

[01:22:01] But first, let me tell you about something wonderful that happened the other day. I actually got a 20-minute lunch break. So I grabbed my lunch bag and I headed to the teacher's lounge. I made a beeline for the microwave that actually works.

[01:22:18] And while it was heating, I listened to a couple of teachers talking about another friend who'd left for Prince William County. It's a common conversation, teachers leaving Fairfax versus the

surrounding counties. Now, I've been teaching at Madison for 24 years, but if money was the only issue, I would have left years ago to work in near Germantown, Maryland, where I live.

[01:22:42] It's a couple hundred dollars a month cheaper to rent, and I'd make about $12,000 a year more. Or maybe I could have moved to Prince William, where by the time I retired, I would be earning $25,000 more a year than working the same job in Fairfax County.

[01:22:58] But you don't have to worry about me. I've loved teaching at Madison and plan to retire from here. But I'm not like other teachers. The average educator lasts 10 to 14 years in our profession, and that's it.

[01:23:15] Then they leave moving on to higher-paying, less stressful jobs. I hear a county pension is better than most, and I'm fortunate to be able to work long enough to earn it. However, the average teacher only lasts 14 years. A pension plan will not be enough to make them stay.

[01:23:34] On the other hand, a pay increase might. Personally, if we go on what my partner and I half-jokingly call an austerity budget, the increase could help us find one of the cheaper rentals in the area, and maybe I could have a 30-minute commute instead of an hour and a half.

[01:23:53] I'd be able to sleep in past 5 a.m. and maybe get home an hour before dinner. I know. I'm lucky to be a teacher. As they say, teachers make a difference in kids' lives.

[01:24:09] They also say our jobs are so critical that we should make as much as professional football players, but of course we won't. However, the school board's plan might help a teacher leave on time instead of staying after school tutoring every day.

[01:24:24] Or make it so they can quit their second job at TJ Maxx. or make it so they don't have to sit in bumper-to-bumper traffic every day, hoping there are no accidents or lane closures. So please support the school board's budget.

[01:24:43] It will make a difference. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 22 is Brenna Diamantes, to be followed by Melissa Landoverde, Kathy Cole, and Jerry Poggi.

[01:25:00] Welcome, Speaker number 22, Ms. Diamantes. Hello, my name is Bronna Diamantis, and I'm here on behalf of ACCA Child Development Center. Us early educators have put together a video for you since a picture is worth a thousand words.

[01:25:17] Well, in this case, a video.

[01:25:36] I'm going to be able to reset this. Is that right? Restart this?

[01:26:50] Let's see if we can restart this so that we can make sure we have the volume.

[01:27:41] ACCA Child Development Center, where every child's potential is nurtured and every family is supported on their journey towards success.

[01:28:19] For over five decades, ACCA CDC has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for families in North Virginia, providing high-quality early childhood services to those who need it most. I am Mehran Abai. I'm a parent.

[01:28:37] ACCA helped me to have opportunity for my daughter to be in a school. If she had been at home, she wouldn't have gained the skills that she has now, like communication, now she can

communicate with her peers, she can socialize with her peers and others. Also it helped me to go out and work and bring income to my family.

[01:29:04] My name is Carla Alvarenka. My son attended ACA for 2 years. The first year he started in ACA. Me dijeron que él necesitaba soporte de ITC, lo cual seguí con el paso de ITC y ahora él tiene cuatro años y está en Child Find, que es un apoyo adicional que él necesita como va a ir a la escuela. He visto mucho progreso cuando él empezó a estas clases, porque al principio él no

[01:29:40] I enjoy being a teacher, working with young children to shape their minds, helping them succeed and try to meet their goals and needs. That's one of my main points. Here we have

[01:30:15] a very diverse community and we serve different families, low income, some children with special needs and my main focus is to try to help them succeed working with specialists, working with the families, working with my team, the teachers, working with the children, and trying to make them happy.

[01:30:40] But as the saying goes, it takes a village, and ACCA Child Development Center needs your help to continue providing these essential services to our community. The challenge of the pandemic and the ongoing economic uncertainty has placed an unprecedented strain on child care providers like those at ACCA Child Development Center.

[01:30:58] Despite all the challenges, ACCA Child Development Center remains committed to serve the most vulnerable members of our community. Over 90% of our families live below poverty level, facing immense obstacles such as job insecurity, limited education, and social vulnerabilities.

[01:31:13] Hi, I'm Brenna Diamantis, and with your support we can make sure that every child has access to the high quality early childhood education that they all deserve. What you do with the budget will have a direct impact on our children, their families, and the entire community as a whole we'll be able to retain the amazing dedicated teachers that have shown us that they are willing and capable of doing what they do throughout a pandemic we'll be able to provide services for children that have a disability or have extra needs such as behavioral or emotional

[01:31:49] challenges that will need extra services and we'll be able to provide the community and families a sense of engagement and provide them with the extra support that they need as you can see aka child development center is a cornerstone in our community we are providing vital services to children and families particularly those that need it the most investing in early childhood education is not just the right thing to do it's an investment that will have positive outcomes for

[01:32:20] our community for many years to come great video thank you very much hi good afternoon and i think

[01:33:04] we're are you are you speaker number 23 yeah melissa excellent welcome hi i'm here representing all early childhood educators my name is melissa landoverde and i have been working at akka cdc for more than seven years as an early childhood educator i love my job as a lead teacher teaching is my passion but sometimes working in this field can become very exhausting and stressful. I had to learn how to balance my personal and work life to be able to fulfill both roles but it's difficult

[01:33:37] when facing financial challenges especially when you only have one income. It is unfortunate that the job I love often does not acknowledge all the hard work I do. It really does not provide the security and the financial stability I need for my family and I'm not only speaking for me most of more than half of

the early childhood educators have to have two jobs to be able to support their families. I am a single mother of two that is trying to survive with a teacher salary that is

[01:34:13] not enough to cover my housing food and other vital expenses. This is the reality of most of early childhood educators in Virginia. Today everything is going up except up salaries. Besides As my full-time physician at ACA CDC, I also have a part-time, some weekends job, which helps me barely meet my financial needs.

[01:34:36] The sad part is I have to leave my family behind, and I don't have enough time to spend with them. It is ironic that during the pandemic, early childhood teachers were considered essential, personal. But we were back to not stay home because we were first responders, and the economy would come to halt.

[01:34:57] We needed to be at work, and we were ready. And we did it with a lot of pride, and we took care of all our students with an annoying risk we exposed ourselves during that pandemic.

[01:35:15] But we love what we do. But besides the applause and the congratulations, we really did not get an increased pay as a magnitude that our public schools peers receive and continue to enjoy.

[01:35:32] Let me tell you a little secret. Fairfax County Public Schools pre-K and kindergarten teachers do the same work we do. Yet, they get paid significantly more. The funny thing is that now early childhood educators and centers fall under the purview of the Virginia Department of Education.

[01:35:54] Like it or not, we are part of the school ecosystem, but we are not equal when it comes to pay. At ACA CDC, for the past two years, we have lost two-thirds of our teachers to Fairfax County Public Schools and other public school systems because our teachers are well-trained, experienced, and truly love educating young children.

[01:36:16] However, Puppets County Public Schools' preschool teachers earn higher salaries compared to our teachers. I just want to say that I believe we deserve a better salary because teaching is not an easy job. It requires a certain type of person to perform this job and do it well.

[01:36:33] We play a crucial role, and we're making a big impact on society by shaping the future generations. We continue education, we train constantly, we work long hours to come up with meaningful lessons, plans, and engage with children and families. We provide emotional support, we mentor, we guide, and much more.

[01:36:51] So please, do not cut any money for the FY 2025 budget for Early Childhood Services. Thank you so much. Thank you. Speaker number 24 is Kathy Cole.

[01:37:09] Speaker number 24 is Kathy Cole, to be followed by Jerry Poggi. Jeffrey Sachs and Vicki Fishman. If I called you, please be ready to provide your testimony. Ms. Cole, welcome. Thank you. Chairman McKay, members of the Board of Supervisors, County Executive Brian Hill.

[01:37:27] My name is Kathy Cole, and I'm chair of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging. I address you on behalf of my colleagues and representatives of Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church. We all recognize that a significant increase in the older adult population is expected for Fairfax County and is the fastest growing segment of the county's population.

[01:37:50] Those adorable children that we just saw will someday be part of the population I am talking to you about today. Given this statistic and in the difficult budget environment, the Commission is pleased to

see that the advertised budget contains no cuts that would adversely affect older adults.

[01:38:07] Thank you to County Executive Brian Hill. I also want to thank you all for the many years of support for the program serving older adults and family caregivers especially for the funding provided to continue with the older adult the older americans act programming and mandates such as home delivered meals providing meals to more than 500 frail homebound low-income older residents and for the ombudsman program which serves as advocates for residents rights and improves the quality of life for more than 11,000

[01:38:40] residents in 129 nursing and assisted living facilities. As this segment of our county's population increases in numbers, 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 where they provide benefits to the county, a huge volunteer base, contribute to the local economy, pay taxes, we must recognize that the use of an equity lens that considers the well-being of all people, including those who are farther along on the aging journey, will serve us all well.

[01:39:18] This is a daunting task, I admit. As identified through the recent CASOA survey, transportation, housing, and affordability were the top concerns reported. The Commission supports the budget plan to increase the funding for the TOPS program, allowing more older adults more options for necessary transportation.

[01:39:37] Today, we've heard compelling testimony regarding the need for affordable housing, and the Commission is pleased to know that options for affordable housing are in the pipeline and support the additional FTEs to provide support for this program.

[01:39:53] We all realize that this is an immediate need. The Commission asks that the Board of Supervisors keep in mind the ability to continue to afford to live in Fairfax County is very much on the minds of older adults, as also been testified to that point today by others.

[01:40:10] As you're aware, older adults would rather age in place in their own home where they have raised families, put down roots in the community, and paid taxes to support the many services that are offered here. Unfortunately, the cost of living in our area is quite high.

[01:40:26] In this regard, we ask that you consider a phased approach to the increase for senior centers and adult-day health care centers. Senior centers provide opportunities for much-needed connectivity. The prevalence of feelings of isolation and lack of community engagement opportunities were both highlighted in the Kosovo report.

[01:40:47] Adult-day health care centers provide much-needed respite and support for family caregivers. While there are programs in place for scholarships and reduced fees, some may self-select out of participation due to financial concerns. This would be an unfortunate consequence of an immediate and full fee increase.

[01:41:09] As we continue our work on Shape the Future of Aging plan, we hope to address the needs identified in the CASOA survey in a way that satisfies Supervisor Herides' directive affordable, actionable, and achievable. We look forward to the next Older Adults Committee meeting with Supervisor Alcorn as chair and Supervisor Palachuk as vice chair.

[01:41:32] We welcome this opportunity to present the work accomplished thus far. The commissioners wish to thank all of you for your support, and we look forward to shaping the future of aging. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 25 is Jerry Pogey, to be followed by Jeffrey Sachs, Vicki Fishman, and Cookie Blitz.

[01:41:56] Welcome, Jerry. Hi, I'm Jerry Poggi, grateful for your leadership towards supporting affordable homes for all. Today, I echo advocacy from our colleague, Mary Payden, now recuperating in Mount Vernon Nursing Healthcare.

[01:42:15] Better mobilized, our community can and must do more. If starting anew in Vienna today, my spouse and I, with two PhDs, dreaming of having a child, could not afford our current home. Despite enormous FCPS support, our daughter and too many young adult children cannot work and live in their county where we invested in them.

[01:42:42] Ensuring affordable homes is a right. It's my congregation's imperative ever since nurturing an annual interfaith hypothermia shelter two decades ago. Long-time service on the county's Human Services Council and Affordable Housing Advisory Council informs my testimony.

[01:43:05] Seize the rich religious, moral, and economic imperatives that call us to ensure homes for our children, seniors, neighbors with disabilities, young professionals, and the increasing numbers of children, young adults, and elders at or near homelessness.

[01:43:24] Continue on our road to devoting the equivalent of two pennies on every $100 of property tax valuation, about $64 million per year, to preserve and build new affordable homes, especially for housing for those most in need.

[01:43:44] Incrementally, invest another $32 million into the baseline budget over the coming years. Every quarterly budget review and during carryover seek the best advantage to preserve and build homes.

[01:44:02] Federal funds covering many costs during COVID's peak. Now, responsibility for providing shelter devolves to the county. Fund gap programs and provide emergency shelter during coming years, while new supportive housing is being financed and constructed.

[01:44:22] This includes more 24-7 shelters during extreme heat, days and nights in the summer. Homelessness's solution is a home. Amid a nationwide and local housing shortage, rents are surging to unprecedented levels and many renters cannot keep pace.

[01:44:46] Across America, more than 3.6 million evictions are filed each year. Fairfax is not immune. Drive our next county budget to prevent this growing threat. Pursue two proven strategies, rights to counsel and rental assistance to those in needs.

[01:45:08] Further fair housing by funding paired testing to ensure county landlords follow state law by accepting county and federal vouchers from new tenants. Let's actualize 300 new state permanent supportive housing vouchers by revealing compliance status, discern whether further education or enforcement is needed, encourage OREP to be equally vigilant in ensuring fair lending practices on mortgage loans.

[01:45:44] Please explore Pew's recent report on needed Virginia zoning reform. In our youth, builders constructed starter homes that fill that void, but restrictive Virginia zoning and nationwide has blocked lower cost starter rentals and owned homes.

[01:46:11] through drawn-out permitting processes, large minimum lot sizes, and banning townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and quadruplexes. Turn NIMBY into YIMBY. Board members, please sign on to make this happen, even in two exclusive Clifton and Great Falls.

[01:46:37] Expanded staffing for HCD is essential if we are to achieve our goals. Mobile park residents need HCD leaders to expand beyond their annual work plans to seek brand new HUD manufactured housing preservation via the price competition.

[01:46:56] Through their expertise, our county staff continually leverages federal, state, and local processes, further enable them by constituting a formal partnership between HCD, our Economic Development Agency, the Department of Economic Development, and AHAC to grow many more business partnerships for affordable homes.

[01:47:20] Driven by greater community engagement and mobilization, Fairfax can move in a better direction to our collective benefit. Together, we must build back better to create a much more beloved community. Thank you very much, Jerry.

[01:47:37] You stand in well for Mary. We wish her well. We wish Mary well in her recovery, so thank you. Speaker number six is Jeffrey Sachs, followed by Vicki Fishman, Cookie Blitz, and Steve Steve Cerny. If I called your name, please be ready to testify. Welcome. This is speaker number 26, Jeffrey Sachs. Welcome. Thank you, Chairman McKay, and thank you, members of the board.

[01:48:02] I appreciate the opportunity to speak today, and thank you for the NAACP for their leadership and vision in guiding many of us to come and share our views. My name is Jeff Sachs, and I serve as a rabbi of Temple Road of Shalom in Falls Church in the Fairfax County portion of Falls Church.

[01:48:19] My own commitment to our obligations to ensure the needs of every resident in our community compels me to lend my voice to this budget guidance. We all have our own sources of wisdom that guide us in making decisions about our community and its priorities.

[01:48:37] Speaking for myself, my congregation and I will be observing the Jewish holiday of Passover in one week. As we begin the Seder, sitting around at our tables, we'll hold up the unleavened matzah bread and say, Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all in need come and celebrate Passover.

[01:48:58] Now we are slaves. Next year may we be free. We all recognize that freedom is not only liberty from bondage. Real freedom requires a seat at the table, a safe and secure place to call home. We also call on each other at the Seder table to see ourselves as having personally endured the oppression and then the wandering of our ancestors.

[01:49:23] It must be felt not only as a collective memory from many years ago, but rather as our own experience so that we can appreciate the urgency of addressing the presence of barriers in our own communities to true freedom. I ask this board, when allocating the county's resources, to remember that the community is not whole until every person has a seat at the table and a secure place to call home.

[01:49:50] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Jeffrey. Speaker number 27 is Vicki Fishman, to be followed by Cookie Blitz, Steve Cerny, and Joanne Norton. Welcome, Vicki.

[01:50:06] Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Vicki Fishman, the Virginia Director of Government and Community Relations for the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. It's been my

honor to be in touch with each of you in recent weeks on a variety of issues that impact the Jewish community of Fairfax County.

[01:50:22] Thank you for sharing our celebrations and seeking to understand and address our concerns. Today, I am grateful to our partners at the NAACP for spearheading a housing coalition to address this eminently local issue together.

[01:50:38] As a multi-group coalition, we approach this issue from different perspectives, but present it to you as something that is solely and squarely in this board's purview. Simply put, the county budget is where this issue must be addressed. If you do not allocate funds for affordable housing, who will?

[01:50:57] Let me take a step back and tell you a little bit more about who I represent. The JCRC is the public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community, representing over 100 synagogues, schools, and institutions throughout our region. Since its inception, the JCRC has championed the cause of civil and human rights on the local, state, and national levels.

[01:51:19] The agencies we represent champion these causes every day through their social service work in Fairfax County. Our synagogues, the Poses JCC, Gesher Jewish Day School all engage in significant volunteer efforts.

[01:51:36] And the professionals of our social service agencies provide services to those in need. Through these professional and volunteer efforts, our agencies' work includes support for people in need of affordable housing for many different reasons. We work with individuals with disabilities seeking to maintain their ability to live independently.

[01:51:55] We work with those returning to community after incarceration in need of a secure foundation from which to grow and contribute. We work with schools supporting students through tutoring, mentoring, and food packs to help them through long weekends when school lunches will not be available.

[01:52:13] We have worked for many years with refugee families from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other conflict zones as they settle and begin their new lives in our community. The lack of affordable housing is central to each of these struggles and makes each of these issues facing our Fairfax County community all the more difficult to overcome.

[01:52:36] I note further that while these scenarios are some of the most acute, the creation and funding of affordable housing is not just an issue for the most desperate in our community. Affordable housing is an issue for moderate-income households, for the workforce, for teachers, for first responders, for construction workers, nurses, software developers, all of whose presence are critical to the overall success, functioning, and economic well-being of our county.

[01:53:01] As the cost of housing rises with increased rental rates, these households increasingly face affordability pressures and displacement, pushing them toward the housing units that would otherwise be available to lower-income households. Expanding the availability of quality housing in the moderate rent range, therefore, not only benefits the essential workforce, it also helps to reduce pressure on the limited supply of lower-cost housing.

[01:53:26] For these reasons, I am here today to ask you to demonstrate your commitment to affordable housing by investing in it. I encourage you to use this year's budget to fulfill the Board's commitment to

devote two pennies in every $100 of property tax valuation to preservation and building of new affordable housing.

[01:53:42] I additionally ask you to increase funding for neighborhood community services meetings in disadvantaged communities so that members of these communities can be effectively engaged in development and policy issues. I urge you to see the cost of these affordable housing initiatives as an investment.

[01:54:02] The cost of not acting, the lost economic opportunity, and increased social spending on people who are ill-housed is far more expensive. The loss of good workers, such as teachers, police, and firefighters to other jurisdictions, as we've heard earlier this afternoon, is immeasurable.

[01:54:18] We know that failure to address housing affordability challenges leads to slowing employment growth, causes people to leave the region and settle elsewhere, and generally undermines our region's economic growth and prosperity altogether. Jewish tradition recognizes the importance of the home.

[01:54:35] We are taught that the home is a mikdash me'at, a mini sanctuary, a sacred place. Today, I ask you to invest in creating sacred places here in our community. Thank you. Thank you, Vicki. Speaker number 28 is Cookie Blitz, to be followed by Steve Cerny, Joanne Norton, and Reverend Alyssa Densham.

[01:55:02] If I've called your name, please make sure you're down close, ready to testify. Cookie, welcome. Good afternoon. I live in Hunter Mill District and a member of the NAACP Housing Committee, AHAC, and the CAB.

[01:55:19] In some ways, being here feels like deja vu all over again. Many of us have appeared multiple times to advocate and agitate for safe, affordable, well-located, stable housing for everyone in all parts of the county.

[01:55:35] That's the linchpin for employment, education, and quality of life that Fairfax County strives for. For persons with disabilities, this need is even more critical. 35% of households served by the FCRAJ include a member with a disability.

[01:55:54] OREP reports in 2020, 47% of complaints received regarding housing were disability-related. Between 2018 and 2020, the number of housing complaints based on disability doubled.

[01:56:11] We request more OREP resources be devoted to testing and enforcement regarding applicants with disabilities, as well as those who use vouchers. Housing discrimination based on source of funds is prohibited in Virginia.

[01:56:27] We are grateful to the Board for raising its housing goal to 10,000 affordable units. We also celebrate the near completion of one university, specifically Belmont, which is only open to family units with at least one member, 62 plus, where all units are income restricted.

[01:56:47] It was particularly exciting for me to hear that many elements of universal design have been incorporated there in both planning and construction. Since Belmont is only for older adults, those features are of the utmost importance because many of the residents will acquire a disability at some point as they further age in place.

[01:57:10] Two specific asks of the board. Add another penny in fiscal year 2025 for a total of two cents to our real estate tax. That is the only way we can hope to achieve our housing goals and support crucial investment for projects in the pipeline.

[01:57:29] And commit to maintaining full funding for five new positions in HCD that will support the creation, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable housing. And as always, thank you for the opportunity to participate.

[01:57:46] Thank you. Speaker number 29 is Steve Cerny to be followed by Joanne Norton. Reverend Alyssa Densham and Sarah Salvaro D'Souza. If you are here, please make your way down so that you're ready when it's your turn.

[01:58:06] We are on speaker number nine. Mr. Cerny, welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and the board. I'm Stephen Cerny, a retired HUD attorney and a Fairfax NAACP housing committee member.

[01:58:21] I also volunteer with Legal Services of Northern Virginia in Pro Se Landlord Tenant Court on Fridays, where I share information with tenants facing eviction. This includes helping them to obtain assistance from Fairfax County through nonprofit organizations such as FACETS.

[01:58:41] I'm not speaking on behalf of any of these organizations today. Today I want to address the ongoing eviction crisis in our community and the need for more rental assistance funding. As you know, evictions in Fairfax County have risen since the onslaught of the COVID pandemic. For a period of time, various renter protections were in place, including a federal eviction moratorium. The federal government also provided significant funding to the county for rental assistance. A Virginia law required landlords seeking to

[01:59:17] evict tenants for non-payment of rent to first seek ERA Act rental assistance from the state or their local governments. That law expired in July 2022. As a result, writs of eviction orders in Fairfax have, with some variations, been at their highest level since 2020. County staff reports that 962 households were evicted from their homes in 2023. Service providers and county staff informed me that the lingering impact of the pandemic on employment is a major

[01:59:54] factor in the rise in evictions. On February 27th, the board's housing committee heard presentations from county staff on the status of the eviction crisis and its efforts to develop more affordable housing. Staff provided much useful information and data, and committee members asked many insightful questions.

[02:00:19] Chair McKay asked a very important question. Although the county has done much to assist tenants impacted by the pandemic, what policymakers and advocates need to know is to what extent the actual need is being met.

[02:00:36] Following up on Chair McKay's question, Supervisor Alcorn, referring to the 962 evictions last year, asked staff if they could provide a breakdown on how many of the evictees ended up homeless and how many of them were rehoused.

[02:00:52] This information will be very useful to policymakers, advocates, and service providers going forward. Finally, conversations I've had with colleagues, county staff, service providers, and advocates suggest that the overall need is not being addressed due to insufficient resources.

[02:01:14] I understand that the county will receive another tranche of federal bridge funding very soon, which will help. However, the county will need to provide additional rental assistance funding for some time to come. Thank you. Thank you, Steve. Speaker number 30 is Joanne Norton.

[02:01:32] Joanne Norton, Reverend Alyssa Densham will be next. We are on speaker number 30, Joanne Norton. Welcome. Welcome, Chairman and members of the board. This board I'm particularly proud of because I've seen some really great work done here.

[02:01:53] My name is Joanne Norton. I talked to you, I think, two years ago and gave you my saga story of homelessness and getting county housing for a while and then buying my own home and helping my family that way.

[02:02:09] i came to fairfax county in 1975 and my family rented a three-bedroom apartment for two hundred dollars and um of course i'm here to talk about affordable housing and i'm going to mention um the elderly because now i am a proud resident of herndon house in her um harbor house in herndon and i'm very very grateful and i'm very very lucky um the population of fairfax county is now one

[02:02:41] million three hundred thousand fifteen percent of those are elderly and i think i think it's like 195 000 that's a lot of people the elderly um are i'm 82 now next year uh 10 years from now i'll be 92 and we grow more and more infirm and so the need for um housing for the elderly is very very important and i hope you continue to give what you are doing um i wasn't able to get the waiting

[02:03:19] list but i remember when i was out looking for um housing it was like three or four hundred and each housing that you have. So I urge you to support that. Many people talking before me about this affordable housing which we all need in Fairfax County which were um have told you more of the reasons that we need it and um they were very good so I won't bore you anymore. Thank you.

[02:03:48] Thank you for the work you do. It's important. Thank you Joanne. Reverend Alyssa Tensham is speaker number 31. And after her will be, I see Sarah, speaker number 32. Speaker 33 will be Finn Yates, 34, Cora Lundgren. If you are here, please come down closer so we're ready when it's your number. Welcome, Reverend Dencham. Thank you. Good evening. My name is Alyssa Dencham, and I am the pastor of Provision Church, a Methodist missional faith community in Northern Virginia. We live out

[02:04:26] our mission in community with our neighbors who are struggling with the lived realities of generational poverty and systemic racism. We currently operate two community cafes in Northern Virginia, providing day centers where those who are experiencing housing insecurity can find abundant welcome, chef-curated nutritious and delicious light meals and snacks, connection to desperately needed resources, and a safe place where they can linger for as long as they like.

[02:04:55] With just two days of our cafes each week, we serve approximately 800 meals a month. We're not a housing advocacy organization. We deploy a community-first case management model that engages people in deep conversations at abundant tables to help them name their needs and connect with resources so that they can thrive.

[02:05:19] And while people come from all over the county to attend our cafes in Springfield, the one thing they have in common is the staggering level of housing insecurity. Some of our neighbors are people who sleep rough or use our county's shelter system. Others have housing right now, but are unsure of exactly how long they'll have that housing for. And the stories we hear from them each week are heartbreaking. We have a brother and a sister who couldn't afford room and board at a local

[02:05:55] college. And because they have no family around to support them and fell behind on their bill, they had to enter our shelter system. They both have jobs in the Springfield area, but when the county's hypothermia shelter was in Chantilly, it took them three hours to get there. And during the recent bus

strike that happened, they couldn't afford that taxi ride. And as a result, slept outside in the elements. Another one of our friends is a customer service agent for a major

[02:06:32] company. She was taking phone calls and navigating solutions for customers while also navigating how to exit homelessness. One of my favorite people in our community, pastors shouldn't have favorites, but we do. They are working on their master's in cybersecurity while living out of their car.

[02:06:55] And then we have Provisions Community Connections Assistant, who I've shared with you before. And we are still working alongside him and have been working alongside him for over a year to find safe, supportive housing that he can actually afford.

[02:07:10] In another county nearby, we're working with an affordable housing project that has a 3,000-person waiting list for their 144 units. I don't think this is a story that is unfamiliar to us here in Fairfax County either.

[02:07:27] Fairfax County is growing at an incredible rate, and the average median income in this county is six figures, and yet we have people who live in a precarious housing situation. When I worked at Rising Hope Mission Church on the Route 1 corridor, I always knew when it was the end of the month, because the apartment complex across the street would bring in the big dumpsters for the folks that would be evicted on the first of the month because they wouldn't be able to pay their rent. At Provision Church, we have friends who are doing everything they can to find financial security. Every time they get a raise, they find that their rent's been raised

[02:08:06] on them too. Provision Church is grateful for the commitment the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors has made to affordable housing. We're grateful for the way that this board shows up even in those spaces where the loudest voices in the room are against affordable housing.

[02:08:22] But there is more that we can do and more that we should do to provide spaces and places for our most vulnerable residents. We need more and better coordinated shelters, especially during the cold months, so that our friends do not have to travel hours to find a warm place to sleep at night.

[02:08:40] We need more support for daytime centers, especially during the coldest and the hottest months, So individuals have a place to go when there's nowhere else for them to go. We also urge the county to work with faith communities to make it easier for them to use the valuable land that they already own to construct affordable housing.

[02:09:01] Many of our churches have the will to begin this work and have found the process full of seemingly insurmountable and red tape and vociferous opposition from neighborhood groups. The need for affordable housing in Fairfax County is real, and it is urgent.

[02:09:19] Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 32 is Sarah Selvara DeSouza. After her will be Finn Yates, Cora Lundgren. If you're here, come on down.

[02:09:35] Sarah, welcome. Hi. Good afternoon. I'm Sarah, Executive Director of Rest and Strong. We're a 100% volunteer-powered nonprofit based in Hunter Mill in Walters District. A big welcome to our newly elected supervisors. I don't know if I can still say newly elected.

[02:09:51] You've had a few months. And a huge thanks to all of you who re-upped and signed up to do this job again. We've had some big wins in the last few years since COVID. Our beloved team of Tom and

Tom, who I don't see here today, but they've been busy. Nearly 4,000 units of affordable housing completed or in the pipeline.

[02:10:12] No small achievement in the last few years. Huge thanks. The board has made some bold decisions too. An independent COC led by the inspiring David Meyer, we're looking forward to their recommendations and suggestions they come with. The vote, thank you, Walter, for the PSH pre-development dollars, which makes the path to PSH easier for redevelopers and people who want to get into it.

[02:10:36] 300 additional PSH vouchers. Cannot say that enough number of times. The difference that we'll make in lives is huge. But keep in mind, not everyone will qualify. This list can go on and on and on all day today, but the most exciting news for us in Reston is the temporary overflow shelter.

[02:10:55] There's lots of questions that still need to be answered, but we're hugely grateful to our supervisor, who's been a champion for the community and carried this cause. Thank you, Walter. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for listening to us, hearing us, and caring, for walking the hill, talking to folks, understanding their real needs.

[02:11:16] This is not performative. this is genuinely from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you. To those of you who've heard me testify before, you know I love to use quotes. If it's done right, why repeat it? The moral test of government is how the government treats those who are in the dawn of life, that's the children, who are in the twilight of life, the elderly, those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped. Truer words have not been spoken to describe our unhoused neighbors.

[02:11:46] the newborn cradled in his mother's arms at the shelter, the lonely veteran waiting for the nurse, every demographic in between, they look to you, our leaders, not for privilege and luxuries, but for basic human needs, food, shelter, safety, and dignity. That's all we ask.

[02:12:07] Since this is a budget hearing, I'll be remiss if I don't mention numbers. So here we go. Our closest comparison is Montgomery County. Among others, they're a fair comparison because of the numbers. They have a similar population to ours.

[02:12:23] In 2022, Fairfax County had 1,100 folks experiencing homelessness. Montgomery counted 581. Why the big difference? Why the gap? Could it be our budgets? Montgomery County has $49.5 million listed as a budget line item for homelessness services.

[02:12:47] Fairfax OPH, the budget in front of you, has $23.8 million, which if you notice will be $2 million short of last year's revised budget. This board has made bold decisions in the past.

[02:13:04] You know how to do this. You're not afraid. We turn to you and ask you to do that again. This is not the time to hold back. Funding homelessness is not a write-off. It's an investment. you're investing in the people of Fairfax, both old and young, and in doing so, building a better Fairfax. It takes a village. Our village has come through for us, from the supervisor and his dedicated staff, the OPH team, Tom, for their commitment, the county service providers, our fellow advocates, Fairfax County NAACP Housing Committee, led by the unstoppable Mary Payton,

[02:13:40] who I'm sure she's watching us wherever she is today, hospital room, rehab, I know she's here with us. Pastor Walton, who will be here shortly to inspire the rest of us. He does that anytime he opens his mouth to speak. He holds us to a higher standard, expecting us to serve our community the best way

possible. And to the many, many wonderful, dedicated citizens committed to the cause, standing behind me, we have been so blessed to stand among giants, miracle workers, true heroes.

[02:14:10] Thank you. Thank you, Sarah. Speaker number 33 is Finn Yates, to be followed by Cora Lundgren, Marlon DeBoson, and Dr. Elizabeth Fraser.

[02:14:28] If you're here and can come on down closer, so when it's your time, we're ready for you. Welcome, Finn. Thank you. Hello. My name is Finn Yates, and I'm 14 years old. I live in Herndon. Today, I will be talking about affordable housing.

[02:14:46] A home is the first step to solve any kind of problem, the lack of a job, a drug addiction, mental illness, or lack of money. Every year, we hand out hot meals with facets. My family specializes in breakfast burritos.

[02:15:03] On a given day, one location can feed up to 100 people breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Every year, during cold seasons, organizations prepare for hypothermia sheltering by handing out hundreds of coats and gloves and providing sleeping spaces at our churches.

[02:15:20] Year after year, people come to collect items given out because they cannot afford to buy them themselves. Instead of temporarily solving these secondary problems, we need to provide our homeless neighbors with housing. This will solve their own problems by drastically making it easier.

[02:15:43] For example, someone might not be able to hold down a job because they can't keep clean because they live on the streets and have no place to shower. They might not be able to get to work on time because they had to move sleeping spots the night before and didn't get enough sleep With a home people can keep clean get enough sleep so they can find a job Someone might have a mental illness or a drug addiction that only is worse when they live on the streets With a home people can keep I mean whoops my bad With a home people will feel safe and secure something necessary to combat any mental illness or addiction

[02:16:21] Providing a home will supply your homeless neighbors with more than just a place to sleep the night. Housing affects not only our homeless neighbors living in Fairfax, but also our low-income neighbors who need affordable housing in order to prevent them from becoming homeless.

[02:16:40] In Fairfax, many families spend more than half their income on housing. Then, after purchasing necessary items, food, gas, utilities, etc., it leaves very little left over for savings. So when ancillary expenses occur, the communal car needs a new engine, or someone gets a toothache that needs treatment, what happens?

[02:17:02] This lifestyle leads to debt, one of the main reasons why people become homeless. Many people become homeless not because of the lack of a job or an addiction, but because they had no one to fall on during hard times. Because of this, they cannot pay for their biggest expense, housing.

[02:17:20] Affordable housing will leave families with more leftover for their savings so that when they have extra bills to pay, they won't need to give up their home. So, I urge you all to fund more affordable housing because it will benefit a wide subset of people living in our Fairfax County, prevent many people from becoming homeless, and lastly, make Fairfax a better place to live.

[02:17:46] Thank you. Thank you, Faye. And we are on speaker number 34, Cora Lundgren. Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Cora Lundgren, and I work as a programs manager at the nonprofit Bright

Paths.

[02:18:09] I was also recently a college student. I am here with the Fairfax NAACP as a resident of Fairfax County and as a peer advocating for affordable housing and focusing my attention on students at Northern Virginia Community College who are facing homelessness.

[02:18:27] I've seen firsthand from my work that we need advocates for affordable housing. I work with Bright Path's short-term food assistance programs. However, one of the most common factors as to why families seek our services is due to the lack of affordable housing.

[02:18:44] Our typical family with kids makes $40,000 to $50,000 a year and some even less. Students going to college can be at all ages and stages of life. A big reason why people go to college is to access higher-paying jobs. A job can be a path to health care and the ability to afford housing.

[02:19:03] Nova Community College and all colleges can be integral in creating these opportunities. A 2019 report from the Community College stated that 41% of students who did not graduate left for personal reasons and 38% left for financial reasons. The pandemic has had damaging effects on economic security and employment among young adults, causing more trouble for working students since the report was released. Voices for Virginia's Children reports that one in two

[02:19:37] 18 to 24-year-olds in Virginia are unemployed. Many students at Northern Virginia Community College face housing insecurity and homelessness. In 2021, NOVA's President Ann Kress reported that over 13,000 students were facing homelessness. NOVA does not have on-campus housing, so students must either find affordable housing nearby, commute from afar, or without a home may stay in shelters or their car. Section 82542 of Fairfax County Code makes it unlawful for anyone to use

[02:20:14] their car as a human habitation in any public place, and overnight parking is prohibited in Nova Community College parking lots. With Fairfax County shelters being crowded and living in your car being illegal students facing homelessness have very few spaces in which they can do the things it takes to be a student study engage in student organizations complete assignments etc students facing homelessness are instead focused on finding their next meal and finding where they are going to sleep at night we must advocate for more affordable housing in the fairfax county area

[02:20:52] to support Northern Virginia community college students. Development plans, like one university at GMU, provide an excellent model that supports both community members and students. We hope that the Board of Supervisors will build a better engagement model to listen to young adult leaders who are speaking up about affordable housing for college students.

[02:21:14] Thank you for your time. Thank you. We are on Speaker 35, Marlon DeBusin. After Marlon will be Dr. Elizabeth Frazier, Reverend Vernon Walton, and NERA Data.

[02:21:33] If you are here, please make your way near the front so that when it's your time to testify, we are ready to go. Marlon, welcome. Thank you. Good evening. My name is Marlon DeBusin, and I am the Young Adult Committee Chairman for the Fairfax County NAACP.

[02:21:49] As you heard from several of the previous speakers, the Fairfax NAACP has put in affordable housing at the forefront of our advocacy. courtesy of the hard work of Mary Payton. One of our main objectives is to accelerate economic growth and eliminate racial economic disparities through advocating

equal employment opportunities, diverse recruitment, financial empowerment, and building wealth within communities of color.

[02:22:17] At the premise of these pillars is affordable housing. First, I would like to thank the board for their work the past few years on ensuring affordable housing is being prioritized in the county. As Chairman McKay has stated on several occasions, affordable housing is something needed countywide, not just in certain parts.

[02:22:38] I come with the ask for us as a county to hone in on this priority of affordable housing to ensure that young adults are being prioritized. These young adults are just starting their careers, dealing with stagnant starting wages, and likely dealing with the burden of student loans.

[02:22:56] Finding ways for young adults to live in this county is an investment for the future. A future where they are more likely to continue working, and as they work longer, they are hopefully making more money to reinvest in the county, and ideally would stay here and raise a family.

[02:23:12] I was fortunate enough to grow up here and go to Fairfax County Public Schools, receive a great education. The county invested so much into myself, my friends, and my peers, which allowed for us to go to great colleges and start great careers afterwards.

[02:23:28] And due to various circumstances in my benefit, I was lucky enough to buy my first home here in Fairfax County and give back to the community that gave so much to me. But unfortunately, that isn't the case for the majority of my peers. When I ask them why they choose to live in Prince William County, Richmond, Prince George's County, almost all of them say the same thing.

[02:23:51] Fairfax County is just too expensive. The investment we make for our students has always been high and needed. And in order to get a return on that investment here, we need these students to come back to Fairfax County and bring the skill sets they gained elsewhere.

[02:24:09] We need these young adults to return, live, and hopefully raise their families here. I want to use my voice to ensure we're able to alleviate burdens for young adults going forward who are looking to live in our county but are priced out. I hope we can help more young adults have the ability and accessibility to make the decision to come and stay in Fairfax County.

[02:24:33] Let's continue investing in the future. Thank you for your time. Thank you, Marlon. We are on speaker number 36, Dr. Elizabeth Frazier, to be followed by speaker 37, Reverend Walton, speaker 38, Neera Data, and speaker 39, Scott Cryer.

[02:24:56] If you all are here and can come down closer, we would appreciate that. Dr. Elizabeth Frazier. Is Dr. Elizabeth Frazier here? She is. Welcome. I am Dr. Elizabeth Frazier, and I've been homeless since August 3rd.

[02:25:16] There are some things I'd like to point out to you today, but I have some neurological issues, and it's making it very hard to complete simple tasks. First thing I want to touch on is the issue of not having bathrooms to use.

[02:25:33] people don't realize what an impact this has and you know it's uncomfortable for the population it makes us uncomfortable more so than you um and you know i it was when we go in to use the bathroom at restaurants the managers aren't happy i understand that but at the same time i knocked on a door the other day and then it was locked the manager came and opened it she's like oh i'm sorry

[02:26:04] I'm trying to keep the homeless out. I just laughed. You know, maybe some of these facilities could take two time periods every week, two weeks, month, where they agree to somehow find a system, find agreements that they can make to allow the homeless to use the bathroom. I know this would probably not be a big hit with some of the store owners, facility owners, but maybe if they could

[02:26:38] get reimbursed somehow it would make a difference um in terms of housing i know nothing on the housing and how housing and how to create more of a supply but i do know that if there was i know people are trying to educate but if there was a aggressive aggressive aggressive educate education campaign it may help going to people educating them time and time again helping them see it

[02:27:17] time and time again with a better understanding i think people will be more likely to support the legislators and on and and and you to help us um a couple things i want to say um that people don't think of it takes me two and a half hours to get to a job opportunity that lasts 15 minutes i have a car that needs work so i can't use it so i'm gonna spend five hours in total for a 15

[02:27:57] minute job interview um where can i park without getting told to move along uh where can i sleep without being told to move along it's illegal to sleep in my car compassion and understanding Thank you.

[02:28:21] Thank you. Speaker number 37 is Dr. Walton. Speaker number 38 is Neera Dada. And speaker number 39 is Scott Cryer.

[02:28:37] Welcome, speaker number 37, Reverend Walton. Thank you so very much. Good afternoon, everyone. I am both humbled and honored to have this opportunity as the senior pastor of the First Baptist Church of Vienna to address you on this evening.

[02:28:54] First of all, let me take this privilege to thank each of you for your service and for what you do on a regular and consistent basis to make us all feel safe and at home here at Fairfax County. I am well aware that neither the government nor any one institution can solve all of the problems by itself, and that is why I and others continue to commit ourselves to conversation and partnership, but not only to conversation and partnership, but to certainly engage and to push one another in moving the envelope forward.

[02:29:25] U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock has said the pathway to housing should be fair and equitable for everyone. And access to affordable housing is the infrastructure people in our communities need to elevate families into the working class and the middle class.

[02:29:43] It is the foundation that helps people support their families and contribute to their economics. Fairfax County, as all of you are keenly aware, is tremendously blessed by its diversity. It is a county that is made up of people from all walks of life, from all spaces, from all around the world with varied lived experiences.

[02:30:08] That diversity is also seen and experienced in a variety of needs expressed by its residents. I'm confronted daily by individuals and families that are challenged by the rising housing cost and specifically their inability to reasonably maintain a life and lifestyle here in Fairfax County.

[02:30:32] Whether they are new college graduates who have worked hard to achieve the American dream, only to realize living on their own in Fairfax County, a place where they have enjoyed many of their early years, may not be possible.

[02:30:50] or whether or not it's our senior citizens who have worked all of their lives and have arrived at what some would describe as their sunset only to discover their resources will not sustain a reasonable lifestyle in this county.

[02:31:07] Or perhaps even the hardworking individuals who provide essential services to the public and citizens of this county, but at the end of a pay period or at the end of a month cannot afford to keep or to maintain a roof over their head.

[02:31:25] I, unfortunately, have had too many of these conversations. I've heard the stories. I've sat with families in crisis. I've visited and I've served food to those in shelters, hypothermia, and even in tents.

[02:31:42] In addition, I have counseled and consoled family members, some of which that have been a part of my own congregation, who have had to move out of their family homes and move further south to stretch their dollars.

[02:32:00] What is the appeal? I appeal to you, Board of Supervisors, to continue to build upon your commitment, devoting the equivalent of two pennies on every $100 of property tax valuation to preserve and to build new affordable housing.

[02:32:16] I appeal to you to ensure the sustainability of programming that was provided by federal dollars. I appeal to you in the absence of sufficient and permanent shelters to provide emergency temporary shelter when possible.

[02:32:34] I appeal to you to commit to a budget that demonstrates a real investment, a real commitment, and real leadership to the area of affordable housing, ensuring that Fairfax County not only is but remains a model county.

[02:32:50] Again, I thank you for your commitment, and I thank you for what you've already done, but I ask that you would examine new possibilities even at this moment before finalizing the budget. Finally, I thank you for your consideration and leave you with the words of Philip Moffitt.

[02:33:10] A house is a home when it shelters the body and comforts the soul. Thank you. Thank you, Reverend. Speaker number 38, Neera Data, to be followed by 39, Scott Cryer, number 40, Clifford Shoemaker, and 41, Stephanie Lundquist-Aurora.

[02:33:37] Please be ready to testify. We are on speaker 38. Welcome, Ms. Data. Thank you. My name is Neera Dada, and I'm a member of the Housing Committee of the NAACP, but I'm speaking as an individual. I have a question for our supervisors. Have you ever lived a penny away from homelessness, or tried to fill your belly and quench your thirst with air?

[02:33:58] Because I have. Today you've heard from residents who have been tirelessly advocating for years to ask Fairfax County to fund affordable housing. They talked about how quickly they became food or housing insecure. The solution to homelessness is housing. The Board must keep their commitment of two pennies on every $1 of property tax valuation, about $64 million per year, to preservation and building of new and affordable housing for those most in need.

[02:34:27] Our disability community, foster care kids, victims of domestic abuse, teachers, college students, police, fire and rescue, first responders, wait staff, blue-collar workers, and even those with PhDs are directly impacted by the lack of fair and affordable housing. The current rate of one penny, about $32 million, was cut and then raised back to a penny, which promises to achieve a baseline of two pennies.

[02:34:49] We need another $32 million in the baseline budget over the next several years. We call for a baseline of two pennies to achieve the Board of Supervisors' goal of 10,000 new and affordable housing units by 2034. One-time funding for affordable housing should be a priority at every quarterly budget review session.

[02:35:07] The need for urgent temporary shelter is reaching critical levels. We urgently need gap programs and shelter while we wait for new supportive housing to be financed and constructed. We have folks living in tent encampments who have been asked to leave but have nowhere to go. Is it Fairfax County's policy to punish and criminalize those who have nowhere to turn?

[02:35:28] Fairfax County had a decline over 10 years when it concentrated on reducing the homelessness population. The unhoused population is increasing again as housing prices, mortgage rates, and evictions have forced many out of their homes. This includes more accessible shelter during the extreme heat days and situations like last year with the dangerous air quality.

[02:35:50] We asked for paired testing to establish whether county landlords are following state law of accepting county or federal vouchers from new tenants, and we know that they were rejecting these before the law was passed. This testing is usually done by OREP, the Fairfax Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs. We need to know if they are now in compliance or if further education or enforcement is needed.

[02:36:10] Not accepting vouchers was a workaround for many landlords who could no longer legally discriminate based on race, ethnicity, and it needs to stop. Human rights and equity. When working on our budgets, we have to ask ourselves, are we truly committed to housing as a human right and equitable access to shelter and affordable housing?

[02:36:28] Regarding tenants' rights, we ask that the Health and Human Services monitor the needs in eviction courts for rent relief and legal assistance to prevent evictions and provide increased funding as needed when indicated by the data. Periodic reports on the relationships of rising rents, workforce housing, and the migration of workers is also needed.

[02:36:47] We are encouraged by the community meetings held under Neighborhood and Community Services on land use development issues that involve low-income residents and tenants. The solution to homelessness is housing. So how about we fund it? Thank you. Thank you, Neera.

[02:37:03] Speaker number 39 is Scott Cryer and crew. Welcome.

[02:37:22] It's my theme music. Chairman McKay and the Board of Supervisors, before delivering my statement, I have the pleasure of presenting to you Cliff Shoemaker and the Fairfax Jubilaires on behalf of Arts Fairfax.

[02:37:38] Ask me by one summer day, flash those big brown eyes my way, and oh I wanted you for everyone that gets around, swear my feet stuck to the ground, but oh I never did meet you

[02:38:01] before. I said, hello, Mary. So in love. I've heard choice. Wild horses couldn't make me stay away.

[02:38:33] It's about you, good and tight. That's all I need to see for me to stay. Sweet Mary Lou, I'm so in love

[02:38:50] with you. That is called Rated PG, but based on our age, we probably should be called Rated GG.

[02:39:37] Grandparents guidance required, right? Our tenor, Phil Merkel, is a retired Air Force pilot. Our base, Ray Letourneau, is a retired naval aviator who once served as the air boss in the forest stall. I was in the Marine Corps. I'm Cliff Shoemaker, the baritone normally, but our lead couldn't be here, Clarence Holakai.

[02:39:56] So we actually have five members in our quartet. I mean, we really have five members registered in our quartet. And the other member who came to serve as baritone while I move up to lead is Don Johnson. Now, Don allows us to reach five services because he started in the Army. Then he transferred to the Coast Guard and retired from the Coast Guard.

[02:40:13] So we got all five covered. And if we can find a beatboxer from the Space Force, we got it made. We are part of a nonprofit barbershop chorus, the Fairfax Jubilaires. Our chorus, like many nonprofits during the pandemic, struggled a lot.

[02:40:28] And we want to really thank Arts Fairfax for the support they gave us during those difficult years. County support allowed us to purchase equipment, connect with other barbershoppers all over the world through Zoom meetings, and continue paying reduced salaries to our dedicated directors. After our annual show in 2019, we were not able to put on another show until October of 2022 when we teamed up with the wonderful program under the direction of Katie Pierce at Westfield High School, and we put on an all-Disney song show there in October of 2022. And she is an amazing director doing a wonderful job at that high school. On March 10th of this year, we had one

[02:41:04] of those bucket list items where Arts Fairfax helped us to put on a show at Capital One Hall. And for those of you who have been there, you know what a magnificent place that is. We joined our sister chorus, Bellanova, and the Westfield High School chamber singers and some professional quartets to put on a marvelous show called Sing Out a Harmony Celebration in the main theater.

[02:41:23] To quote from an email from Katie Pierce about that experience for her high school students, she says, My students had an amazing time. From the second they walked into the venue, they were welcomed and encouraged by everyone, and it added to their excitement. You should have seen their faces when they saw the dressing room, and then walked backstage for the first time.

[02:41:42] For most of them, this was their first performance in a real venue, and that's pretty magical. They've worked hard this year, and I'm so glad their program was well-received. Congratulations on putting together a fantastic event. It truly was a celebration of harmony. My students really enjoyed themselves and got to see how supportive the music community can be, particularly in barbershop.

[02:42:03] I'm looking forward to more collaborations in the future." From the youngest 17-year-old members of our chorus to the older ones like us, We all had that same magical feeling. Thanks to the Arts Fairfax collaboration, amazing collaboration with Capital One Hall, we can't begin to thank them enough, and we can't begin to thank you enough for the support you give to Arts Fairfax.

[02:42:25] Thank you very much. Thank you, Cliff. Thank you very much, Cliff. Questions? As a former baritone barbershop singer at a much younger age, I greatly appreciate it, and your performance was outstanding.

[02:42:47] So thank you all very much. Now we know to expect a performance from Supervisor Stork in the near future, so we can test you. Scott, welcome. Thank you.

[02:43:03] Chairman McKay, members of the Board of Supervisors, on behalf of Arts Fairfax, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. We also want to extend our gratitude to Cliff and the Fairfax Jubilaires for their service to the country and for sharing their gifts and talents with us here today.

[02:43:20] I've had the pleasure of working with many of you in recent years as chair of the Board of Arts Fairfax. In recognition of your generosity and the difficult budget year that is projected, Arts Fairfax acknowledges the flat funding proposed by county executive Brian Hill in his fiscal year 25 advertised budget.

[02:43:45] On behalf of the county's arts community, many of whom have joined us today, we are very grateful. That's for you guys. We are grateful to the county for its consistent support and continued investment in the arts.

[02:44:03] As you know, this is an exciting time of transition for Arts Fairfax. Joining our audience today is Stuart Holt, our new president and CEO. A national arts education leader with experience in New York, Nashville, and Sarasota, Stuart has a track record for igniting change through arts, engagement in the community he serves.

[02:44:31] Stewart is a leader who believes in the power of collaboration. The Arts Fairfax Board is energized by his vision to continue to strengthen Arts Fairfax relationships with the county, its agencies, and a diverse mix of civic and private partners in ways that support the Fairfax County strategic plan and One Fairfax.

[02:44:51] In fact, I would like to share a few recent examples of how Arts Fairfax, thanks to this ongoing spirit of collaboration, has made important progress in broadening our engagement with the community. Last year, Arts Fairfax worked with the Department of Information Technologies, GIS, and Mapping Services to create the Public Art Locator in service to the County Arts Committee and the Master Arts Plan for Public Art.

[02:45:15] This web-based application to identify and map public art in Fairfax County has already proven to be a useful resource for future creative placemaking, planning, and development. Arts Fairfax also partnered with the Fairfax County Park Authority to realize poetry in the parks as envisioned by the Fairfax County Poet Laureate, Danielle Bodra.

[02:45:39] By bringing free poetry readings and writing workshops to Eleanor C. Lawrence Park, Green Springs Gardens, Huntley Meadows, and Turner Farm, Poetry in the Parks has inspired nature lovers to write and similarly encouraged poetry lovers to experience more of the incredible natural resources that Fairfax County has to offer.

[02:46:02] Additionally, Arts Fairfax worked with several county departments to lower barriers of access to arts programs throughout our Ticket and Participation Study, a subsidy program. In its pilot year, this program's grantees provided a total of 633 tickets to local residents, including opportunities coordinated with Neighborhood and Community Services and Fairfax County Public Schools.

[02:46:26] A fifth of these participants accessed transportation services with the county's Department of Transportation. These are just a few examples of the many efforts, initiatives, and partnerships the Arts

Fairfax team is spearheading to help realize one of our primary goals, to encourage more equitable access to the arts across our community.

[02:46:48] We also want to continue to champion the importance of the arts, not only as a vital part of the overall quality of life available to members of our community, but also as a key contributor to our economic ecosystem. This year, the Arts and Economic Prosperity Study conducted by Arts Fairfax in partnership with Americans for the Arts revealed that just 70 local nonprofit arts and culture organizations who participated in the study stimulate a staggering $260 million in economic activity and $33 million in tax revenues.

[02:47:25] It is important to note that these participating organizations represent less than half of the total number of active arts groups in the county, and that the actual economic impact is even greater than these figures suggest. As Arts Fairfax looks forward, we plan to work more closely with each of you to bring the reliability of Arts Fairfax funding, promotion, and professional development services to arts organizations and artists that serve residents in all of your districts.

[02:47:55] We know that arts and culture flourishes in all areas of this wonderfully diverse county, and it is our vision to build the capacity and raise the visibility of artists and organizations where they are. We are grateful to you and your teams for the help you continue to provide us in our effort to broaden our impact and better connect with community across the county.

[02:48:19] Thank you for your continued support and for everything that you do to improve the quality of life in Fairfax County. Thank you very much, Scott. Thank you very much, Scott and Stuart. Welcome. We're glad, grateful that you're here in Fairfax County. Thank you for joining us tonight.

[02:48:43] We are now on speaker number 41, Stephanie Lundquist-Aurora. Is Stephanie here? Stephanie Lundquist-Aurora. Speaker number 42, Speaker number 43, Kenneth, I'm sorry, Speaker number 42, David Edelman.

[02:49:01] I know David is here. Speaker 43, Kenneth Russell, and Speaker 44, Joel Merchant. If you are here and can make your way to the front, we would appreciate it. And thank you to all of our art supporters for coming out tonight.

[02:49:23] just for updates for everyone we are on speaker 42 david edelman to be followed by speaker 43 kenneth russell speaker 44 joel merchant and speaker 45 anna cartiana if you are here uh please make your way down closer to the front so that we can see you uh welcome mr edelman

[02:49:55] good evening mr chairman and fellow board of supervisors um county executive mr hill and his staff. My name is David Edelman. I'm the chair of the Invest in Fairfax Coalition, a coalition of PTAs, faith-based groups, small businesses, the NAACP, as well as employee groups and unions.

[02:50:24] And as I said before, we appear to be again in a place where our revenues do not match our aspirations uh and we're trying to figure out how to fund what we want to fund i think that we need to match our expenditures to our strategic plan and and and continue to prioritize and i'll talk more about that um we think the board may rethink some of the revenue base of our economy development um you know i don't think that a commercial real estate is um ever going to come back to the place that it used to be and

[02:51:01] to the pre-pandemic levels, we continue to look to diversify the tax base. And we agree with the chairman and others' recent criticism that we deserve more funding from the General Assembly of our own dollars back. However, myself, I have been down to Richmond many times in the General Assembly to argue for changes in the lci and have not had success so what i say is we just need to work with what we have on hand right now so i encourage the board of uh supervisors to consider the meals tax

[02:51:40] as we go forward um you know we are having trouble um retaining and keeping our quality fairfax employees the reasons being is that our surrounding communities for whatever reason in general are going to give about a six percent overall compensation increase and fairfax county is going to give about a four for the general account employees those who are not in the collective bargaining units and this deferential is this difference makes a difference over time

[02:52:18] As well as many Fairfax County employees can't live in the county, so higher pay and cheaper cost of living in our surrounding neighbors makes it very desirable or is a big thought to leaving the county in terms of living and service to the county.

[02:52:39] I recently commend the county executive for identifying 54 positions for elimination that won't have anybody lose their job. as a cost savings especially you know since we are struggling for revenue this year I would ask the board as they review there was another they we added back 42 other positions after we removed that and I don't know I I can't say but I would hope the board would review to make sure that every last one of those new positions because they become new line items is essential because

[02:53:19] i think it's hard to ask the current employees and the teachers because we we fund the school half of our budget goes to the school not to get the raises that they were hoping and but you know we add budgetary new line items so i will look forward to working with you in the future to find solutions for our budget and i certainly promise i'll go down to richmond with you thank you. Thank you, David. Speaker number 43 is Kenneth Russell to be followed by Joel Merchant,

[02:53:58] Anna Cartagena, and Beatrice Parada. If you are here, please make sure you come down close. So when it's your time, we're ready. Mr. Russell, welcome. Thank you. I'm going to deviate slightly and thank the formers of the Virginia State Constitution, which requires this type of forum.

[02:54:16] The $2,000 cry of below funding per student has been consistent for years. The reason has shifted to a 50-state average, not Richmond anymore. Why is that?

[02:54:33] I believe the answer is found in John Fouts' 3-7-23 letter justifying the board's raise. Comparison did not use adjacent counties, but moved north of the Potomac River to surrounding jurisdictions, cherry-picking compensation rates. Why not south of the Potomac adjacent counties? It would not have provided justification. Citizens in the median income area and below are unable to set

[02:55:08] budgets until late April or May, forcing our budgets to be determined. Unlike the county of the county, citizens cannot demand to be made whole by employers or retirement boards. We are forced to live within our means. Cited justification for increase in taxes also affects residents. Citizens are forced to make continuous sacrifices year after year. Last year's taxes,

[02:55:44] it was claimed, would only rise an average of $520. This year, it is only $560. Only does not lessen the burden. As Chairman McKay stated yesterday, when values are high, revenue is high.

[02:56:04] It's clear this does not work in reverse. Why is that? The board's logic is to adjust the rate higher is totally unacceptable. We were taught by loving parents, both from the farm, don't count your chickens before they hatch.

[02:56:21] 2025 proposed budget is a perfect example. County is betting on inflation in the housing market to increase revenue is counterproductive. Underperforming housing market, board expectation is higher.

[02:56:44] The Virginia Constitution has a provision to keep taxes level. the board just chooses not to do it next year for median income group and below every fairfax county budget is tough if not impossible yesterday i heard from the chairman any amount not taken in is covered by our taxpayers believe me we're well aware of this why do builders benefit for not paying full cost of county costs they get the full profit why the fear to go above the state

[02:57:24] the step increase passed yesterday. Could benefactions play a part? Taxpayers certainly do not get step increases. I for one expect fiscal responsibility from my county representative as do the majority of the citizens. Many thanks. Thank you for your testimony. Next we have Joel

[02:57:52] Merchant, Speaker 44. Good evening Chairman McKay, Supervisors. My name is Joel Torres Merchant. I live in PennDaw Terrace Mobile Home Park.

[02:58:09] I've lived there for 10 of the last 15 years, taking a brief interlude to go and attend university. I want to speak to you today on behalf of my community and my neighbors, my neighbors who work in construction, as mechanics, as cooks, house cleaners, landscapers, and many other critical but unglamorous jobs that make a comfortable life possible for so many of us in Fairfax County.

[02:58:33] As development along the Route 1 corridor booms, affordable housing is disappearing at an alarming rate, replaced instead by luxury housing that is more profitable for landowners despite remaining half empty.

[02:58:50] In response to this lack of housing and high rents, my neighbors and I asked for the following much-needed support. First, for $14 million to be made available for rent subsidy funding. Secondly, for $1 million for badly needed repairs and improvements in our mobile home communities.

[02:59:12] Without these and other means of assistance, essential workers like my neighbors and others in our communities will be forced to relocate from Fairfax County. We'll be unable to perform the jobs that we do to make so many of our lives so much better, and the county will be all the worse for it.

[02:59:30] Thank you very much for your time. Thank you for your testimony. Number 45 is Anna Cartagena, followed by Beatriz Parada and Marianella Funes and Josephine Adu, if you come down closer, if I've called your name.

[02:59:47] Thank you. Anna? Good evening. My name is Anna Cartagena. I live in Alexandria area for the last six years, and I'm working in Alexandria for 16 years. and is Uruguay Tech action is necessary for our community?

[03:00:05] We surgically cause to reminding the apartment household airing below 60% of the median income need help finding affordable housing option.

[03:00:22] The individual includes low-income families, seniors, and essential working, single parents, And they sell and find their self-prices out of housing market of force to make difficult choices between

paying rent, buying house groceries, or excessively necessary healthcare services.

[03:00:49] It's not just the matter of finances strength. It's a matter of basic human dignity and associative justice. With most regarding the importance of affordable housing, it's fundamental human rights.

[03:01:05] It's not just only matter of provide shelter, it's about first established and healthy community where everything regarding of income level has the opportunity to thrive.

[03:01:25] It's reserved to this crisis urgent the policy and community lender to prioritize affordable housing initiatives that create the need of those hearing below 60% media income.

[03:01:53] This includes increased funding for subsiding housing programs, increase the development in affordable housing units, and implementing renting control metrics to prevent the rent go higher.

[03:02:14] Affordable housing is not just a dream, it's unnecessary, it's investment in the world of community and the future society.

[03:02:34] By working together in the politics, it's a priority for our housing. We can buy a more equal and inclusive community where everyone has a place to call home.

[03:02:56] Thank you. Thank you. Have a good night. Thank you. We are now on Speaker 46, Beatriz Parada, to be followed by Marianela Funes, Josephine Adu, and Jenny Chambi.

[03:03:16] If you're all here, please come on down and be ready for testimony. Ms. Cartagena, we just heard from. Ms. Parada, welcome. Buenas noches, señores supervisores.

[03:03:33] Mi nombre es Beatriz Parada. I am from the Harmony Play community, I've lived there for many years, with my whole family. I'm also a member of the Inquilinos and Trabajadores Unidos.

[03:03:52] Thank you for giving us the opportunity to talk this night. We thank the supervisor Larch, because he has always accompanied us and visited our community.

[03:04:11] We can see that he has a sincere interest in helping us, but we know that the support of him is not enough. We need to make sure you all want to improve the life of our community.

[03:04:33] Los residentes de Harmony Play reconocemos que ha habido algunos cambios positivos en nuestra comunidad, como por ejemplo nos han reparado las calles, el sistema de agua.

[03:04:52] Sin embargo, a pesar de conversaciones y reuniones con algunos de ustedes, No hemos tenido cambios profundos para mejorar la calidad de vida.

[03:05:10] Nuestra comunidad sigue en peligro de desplazamiento por los altos costos de la renta. En enero de este año recibimos un aumento de 150 dólares.

[03:05:25] Esto es muy triste y duro para nosotros, que nos toca tener dos trabajos. Aún así, decir si compramos comida o vamos al doctor o pagamos la renta.

[03:05:47] Pasado un año de que nos prometió contratar a alguien en el condado para que trabaje directo con nosotros, No hemos visto nada hasta el momento.

[03:06:07] También sentimos el impacto negativo que ha tenido todo el proyecto de desarrollo de la Ruta 1. Sentimos que no fuimos tomados en cuenta al decir sobre estos desarrollos que nos han impactado negativamente contra la comunidad.

[03:06:42] Esperamos que este año ustedes se tomen en serio las necesidades de nuestra comunidad, especialmente a la familia de bajos recursos. Nosotros también queremos vivir en FERFA.

[03:07:00] Somos la clase trabajadora y merecemos una oportunidad de crecer nuestras familias aquí. Les pedimos que, como número uno, asignen un millón de dólares para la reparación de las casas móviles.

[03:07:22] Como número dos, que asignen 14 mil millones para un programa subsidiado de renta para las familias de bajos recursos. Esperamos que nuestras peticiones no se las lleve el viento.

[03:07:44] Que seamos tomados en cuenta. Muchas gracias por escucharnos. Thank you. Thank you. Good evening, Chairman McKay and Supervisors.

[03:08:02] My name is Beatriz Parada. I am from Harmony Place, mobile home community. I have lived there for many years with my entire family. I am also a member of Tenants and Workers United. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak tonight. We thank especially Supervisor Lusk because he has always joined us and visited our community.

[03:08:21] We see that he has an interest in helping us, but we know that his support is not enough. We need all of you to commit to improving the living conditions of our community. The residents of Harmony Place recognize that there has been some positive changes in our community, such as our streets and water system being repaired.

[03:08:39] However, despite conversations and meetings with most of you, We have not had profound changes to improve our quality of life. Our community remains in danger of displacement due to the high rent costs. In January of this year, we received a raise of $150.

[03:08:56] This is very sad and hard for us who have to have two jobs and still decide whether to buy food, go to the doctor, or pay the rent. It's been a year since we were promised that someone would be hired in the county to work directly with us, and we haven't seen anything yet.

[03:09:12] We also feel the negative impact of the entire development project of Route 1 Embark has had. We feel that we were not taking into account when deciding on these developments that have negatively impacted our community. We hope that this year you take seriously the needs of our communities, especially the working-class, low-income families.

[03:09:32] We want to live in Fairfax, too. We are working-class and deserve an opportunity to grow our families here as well. we ask you to please dedicate the following in the 2025 proposed budget. Allocate $1 million for the repair of the mobile home communities.

[03:09:49] Allocate $14 million for a subsidized income program for low-income families. We hope that our requests are not brushed off and are taken into account. Thank you very much for listening to us. Thank you. I'm sorry. Are you Marianella?

[03:10:07] Are you Marianella? You are not. Okay, could you just mention your name in the microphone? We didn't catch that. My name is Ingris Moran from Tenants and Workers United. Excellent. Thank you very much. Okay, so Marianella is Speaker No. 47, and Speaker No. 48 is Josephine Adu, to be followed by Jenny Chambi.

[03:10:27] If you are here, please be ready to testify. Marianella, welcome. Thank you. Good evening, Chairman McCain and supervisors. I'm Marianella, speaking on behalf of Tenants and Workers United. For more than 38 years, tenants and workers have worked with low-income communities of colors across

northern Virginia, including in South Fairfax County along Route 1 corridor, with a focus on mobile home communities.

[03:10:57] We recognize that the county has made some efforts to recognize the vulnerability of mobile home communities. In the last budget, you allocated some funds to hire a mobile home coordinator. Consider a recommendation from the sub-task force and allocate some funding to a pilot program for mobile home repairs.

[03:11:22] However, a year has passed and communities haven't seen any changes. The project hasn't started yet, and the community is in such great need that by the time the project starts, the amount allocated won't be enough.

[03:11:40] We need additional funding and actions to protect families. All across the county, we are facing a housing crisis. Tenants have been receiving the highest rent increases in recent history without receiving the dignified living conditions and a quality of life that they are paying for.

[03:12:04] We feel as thought that the negative impact of developments have not been taken seriously enough by the county officials. Community members feel like the Department of Housing and community developments and the county as a whole have not done enough to address this dire situation, which is affecting low-income communities of color the most.

[03:12:32] We know that our goals can be achieved under your leadership and advocacy. We need you to take action to address the issues facing our communities right now and to prevent mass displacement.

[03:12:49] This upcoming year, we hope you will advocate for significant investments to improve conditions, secure stability, and protect mobile home communities and low-income renters. While you work in the 2025 budget, we are asking you to allocate an additional $1 million for health and safety repairs for mobile homes.

[03:13:14] Allocate $14 million for a locality-funded housing voucher program to support families who earn 40% of the area median income and below. Please remember the One Fairfax policy, which outlines the county's commitment to addressing systematic injustice and supporting opportunities to advance equity.

[03:13:40] This must include adequate funding to the preservation and improvement of mobile home communities and to improving conditions for all low-income renters. We invite you to explore all possibilities, including, but not limited, to land purchases, housing cooperatives, land trusts, and more, to help residents secure homeownerships and housing stability in the communities they love.

[03:14:09] We must get creative and proactive with how we reimagine affordable housing. Thank you for your consideration. Thank you very much. Speaker number 48 is Josephine Adu, to be followed by Jenny Chambi, and speaker 50 is Lauren Hershey, if you can all be ready.

[03:14:34] Josephine, welcome. Hi. This is my first time. Hello. First off, I want to say thank you for giving me this opportunity. My name is Josephine Adu. I'm a first-generation daughter, a sister, and an early childhood educator.

[03:14:52] As a 23-year-old teacher at ACA CDC, navigating the world of teaching can be both rewarding and very challenging. However, one of the most significant challenges that young educators face is the impact of low funding on their ability to provide quality education. Inclusive high-quality child

development programs such as ACA CDC play a crucial role in ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have access to education and support services.

[03:15:23] However, these programs are often required significant funding to operate effectively. The combination of limited resources, lack of sufficient support, and increased workload can contribute to burnout among young educators like myself. Without proper support systems in place, they may become overwhelmed and delusioned with their profession.

[03:15:48] Leading to high turnover rates, I have seen so many of my colleagues have left the field or decided to move to local public school systems. And honestly, and quite frankly, I would hate to see my village that's behind me leave. I would hate to see the families having to go because we can't provide the care for their children.

[03:16:07] Ultimately, the lack of funding can negatively impact the students' success when educators are not adequately supported and compensated. Students may not receive the quality education they deserve, hindering their academics, achievements, and future opportunities. Funding allows inclusive child development programs, such as ACCA, to provide specialized resources and support services tailored to the diverse needs of children with disabilities or developmental delays.

[03:16:35] This may include assistive technologies, therapy services, and individualized education plans, IEPs, to help children reach their full potential. With adequate funding, programs like ACA CDC can invest on ongoing professional development opportunities for staff members, including teachers, therapists, and support staff.

[03:16:56] This ensures that they will have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support children with their desired needs and create inclusive learning environments. Being a 23-year-old educator, and I emphasize my age because there's nobody that would do this my age.

[03:17:15] Being a teacher is not something you just choose to do. You have to love it. You have to have a passion for it, and I do. Being a 23-year-old educator in an environment with low funding presents numerous challenges, from limited resources to increased workload and burnout.

[03:17:33] However, by advocating for change, collaborating with others, investing in professional development, and prioritizing resilience, young educators can overcome these challenges. and to continue to make positive impacts on their lives and of their students.

[03:17:51] Lastly, and I ask respectfully, please do not cut any money from the FY 2025 budget for early childhood services. As requested by Fairfax County, specifically do not approve, and this is a big number, I had to go over it a couple times, One million seven hundred and seventy thousand four hundred dollars proposed to reduction in funds four hundred forty five early early early childhood birth to five.

[03:18:22] These funds could be used to address some of the challenges as described in my testimony. And I will always touch on in our video said it takes a village behind me. That's my village and I can't do anything without my village.

[03:18:39] Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 49 is Jenny Chamby, to be followed by Speaker 50 is Lauren Hershey. Let me repeat, Speaker number 49 is Jenny Chamby, to be followed by Speaker 50, Lauren Hershey, 51, William Miller, 52, Judith Harbeck.

[03:19:04] If you are here, please be ready to testify. Ms. Chamby, welcome. Good afternoon, and thank you so much for this opportunity. On behalf of the AACA Child Development Center, I would like to say thank you for all your hard work, dedication, and support to the community, especially for the assistance you provide for those who need it the most, our young children.

[03:19:24] I also want to take this opportunity to say thank you to our wonderful teachers and our wonderful families who came here to support and advocate for our children. Children are the root of our community and the hope for the future. They are vulnerable and unable to fight for their rights.

[03:19:39] They rely on the adults of their community to advocate for them and to provide the resources and the tools they need to excel in life. Historically, Fairfax County has proven to be a strong demonstrator of the importance of early childhood investment. And this is why, for the first time ever, in October 2021, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adapted a countrywide strategic plan to ensure that every child has equitable access to quality and early learning opportunities.

[03:20:08] The plan states that various Fairfax agencies will support the strategic plan, but this does not provide guidelines or financial support to programs that seek to provide high-quality learning opportunities. This lack of support affects the ability of the programs like ours to provide quality care and limits access to the children in Fairfax County.

[03:20:28] Currently, our program has an adjusted capacity of 250 children. Out of the 215 children, 65 have special developmental needs. The DEA Act clearly outlines that to support children with IEPs and IFSP should receive, but without the opportunity to receive the proper funding, programs that support these children are suffering.

[03:20:52] All of our classrooms are inclusion classrooms, yet only seven children received the special needs funding needed to help support their individual needs. While the budget increases slots for ECLP across the county, Children with special needs receiving ECLP funding are exempt from receiving these special needs reimburseable rates.

[03:21:12] With 30% of the ACA children in special needs services and many more in the process of receiving services, the increase in ECLP slots does nothing to help our demographics. Furthermore, it monetarily penalizes programs that serve children by denying them the additional special needs funding.

[03:21:30] The increase in ECLP slots should not come with a decrease in local funding. Additionally, local subsidy funding for children falls too short of matching the actual rates of child care in Fairfax County. Our mission at ACA CDC is to provide high-quality care for all children of our community.

[03:21:49] But without the proper funding, this becomes an impossible task. Our teachers work tirelessly and support our community, but the community does not support them. Our classroom teachers and children should be a priority for funding without shifting of any funds from different supports.

[03:22:06] are asked for this fiscal year budget. Do not lower the subsidies reversible rates. They need to increase to keep the pace of inflation. Restore the BPI community add-on funding and approve double rate reimbursion for all children with diagnosed learning disability and IEP.

[03:22:25] Do not approve the reduction of 1,740,000 proposed reduction for funds for the 445 early childhood birth to five. This could be used to support all the cited information I give you below.

[03:22:44] Thank you so much, and I please, I urge you to invest now or pay later. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Jenny. Your number 50 is Lauren Hershey to be followed by William Miller, Judith Harbeck, Anna Lugo, And Leo Milinowski.

[03:23:14] If you are here, this is the order in which we will call the speakers. And we are now on speaker number 50, Lauren Hershey. Welcome, Mr. Hershey. 50 at 50. No, I'm 77 now. Mr. Chairman and board, I'm going to speak briefly.

[03:23:33] I tore up my notes. Hold on one second, Lauren. Folks, if we could exit quietly, please, so that we can respect the other speakers who are here. Thank you very much. Mr. Hershey. Yeah, I started to say Lauren Hershey, my wife, and I moved to the county January 1st, 1977, hence the 77 and the 77, if you will, Mr. Chairman.

[03:23:54] Thank you for your attention. I did tear up my notes because I listened to what everybody else had to say and to the quartet and to the animations, and I decided to make reference to my summary of remarks, Attachment to which is a discussion of the beginning of the Greek Olympic Games in 776 B.C.

[03:24:17] So civilization's been working on things for a long time. I will be ad-libbing a little bit. Somebody talked about large numbers, but I want to start at the top if you can see key concepts on the remarks. And I presented these last year.

[03:24:34] This is the fifth time that I am testifying before you. I talked about defining health as holistic health, and it's an open definition. Your health department can define it. A doctor can define it. You can define it.

[03:24:49] I can define it. What is holistic health? Second concept, individual initiative. If I want to be fit, if I want to be healthy, if I want to be well, if I want to run in a cherry blossom race, it's my initiative.

[03:25:06] You can't tell me to do it. These were some of the remarks that I just tore up. And I'm making to you directly. To my amazement, a woman in our neighborhood, in what I call Woodsy, Oakton, not just Oakton, but the Woodsy part, a woman of Chinese descent, a mom, a couple I've known for 10 or 15 years.

[03:25:28] I ran into her the other day. She's petite, and she has a T-shirt on that says, in so many words, I ran the 2024 Cherry Blossom Race, which is Washington, D.C. Time for Fairfax County to do something like that.

[03:25:43] It was a suggestion I made last year, and I'm reiterating it this year because it has something to do with community spirit, with collective endeavor, with peer reinforcement. My fourth key concept, define a functional public-private partnership.

[03:26:04] Partnership for a healthier Fairfax. It isn't a legal document. It's operational policy. This project got started in 2013, but the planning for it began in 2009, 2010.

[03:26:21] And if you look at the next concept, I said live a healthy lifestyle. We can boil all of my remarks down to those four words, live a healthy lifestyle. And number five, examine the chronic disease pandemic in the U.S. from the early 1990s to the present.

[03:26:38] And pandemic is actually semantically incorrect because the chronic diseases are the heart, the cancer, the diabetes, the pulmonary, etc. Pandemics deal with infectious disease. My last three points to you, if you will allow, are action items.

[03:26:58] Please look at page three. If you want to get some hard numbers correct, you're going to have to get a county actuary to tell you where your baselines are, both on chronic disease occurrence, where your metric was, where your improvements are, as well as that fancy term longevity.

[03:27:18] And when I've asked the questions before, I found out to my amazement, Fairfax County, both for men and for women, have in the top 10 best longevity for municipalities in the country. The other two items here, you need to complete an inventory of all sports, athletic, wellness facilities, because there's a lot happening in the private sector.

[03:27:42] Some of it is nonprofit, some of it is for-profit. And the last point is, I said, let's set up a triple challenge. Bike the W-O-N-D, run, jog, or walk the 41 miles or some part of it of the Cross County Trail.

[03:27:58] And let's get a canoe or a rowboat out and do some of the Potomac River. Triple challenge. Thank you for the time. Thank you very much, Lauren. Speaker number 51 is William Miller. Is William Miller here? William Miller, speaker number 52.

[03:28:16] I know Judith Harbeck is here. Judith, if you want to come on down, 53, Enalugo, and 54 is Leo Milinowski. If I just called your name, if you could make your way down closer to the podium, we would appreciate that.

[03:28:32] Ms. Harbeck, welcome. Good evening. I'm Judy Harbeck, speaking on behalf of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, representing homeowners in Mount Vernon for the past more than 60 years.

[03:28:49] You have our resolution, but as I stand here and I listen to my fellow citizens, it seems a bit like Groundhog Day. There's too many needs and wants again chasing too few dollars even as homeowner tax burden increases. Every year as homeowners we're mostly pleased when we get when we see our home assessed value go up for many it's our major asset even though that also means a larger tax bill. No one likes to pay taxes but we know those funds support county services and excellent schools which together protect our home values and our community as a whole. Few of us

[03:29:26] would trade what we have here in Fairfax for a few dollars less in taxes. The average increase would be about $44 per month if the recommended tax rate is adopted. Indeed, the last thing, the very last thing we want to see, is our home values decrease due to decline in quality of life and our schools. We therefore urge you to adopt the recommended tax rate as the actual rate in fiscal year 25. There is, however, one critical way where my groundhog analogy doesn't work.

[03:29:58] Although FCPS is repeatedly cited as the county's priority asset and the driver of its economic future, this budget takes a step backward in support at a time of increasing competition for teachers, following teacher morale, changing demographics, and increased student needs.

[03:30:17] Morale issues have many sources, not all compensation-related, of course, but it's obvious that our schools will not benefit when teachers and administrators are overburdened by student demands and state and federal requirements and are underpaid and under-respected for the dedicated professionals they are.

[03:30:34] In Mount Vernon, we're suffering a virtual hemorrhage of experienced professional staff, teachers, and principals to our better-paying neighbors or out of the profession. Proposed school transfer would likely allow only about a 2% raise, which doesn't meet inflation or market pressure and amounts to

a slap in the face to our hard-working school staff, particularly since county employees are slated to receive significantly higher increases as our federal workers, Social Security, and pretty much all of their public services.

[03:31:07] Our excellent county employees deserve fair pay, but so do our teachers. A few years ago, the county and FCPS undertook a detailed study of market position. That should become a regular undertaking to assure that we build and keep world-class staffs. We know that funding shortfalls and homeowner tax burdens would be reduced if the Commonwealth lived up to its responsibilities in education or returned more of our own money to us.

[03:31:32] But until Richmond gets fairer treatment, we support utilizing all available revenue sources to the maximum permitted and strongly urge reconsideration of a meals tax, which neighboring jurisdictions already have. Education funding is our primary focus, but there are some other issues that deserve attention.

[03:31:52] Stormwater management funding continues to be inadequate and results in critical problems for homeowners, businesses, and developers. We urge that an increase of stormwater tax rate of at least one quarter percent be adopted in fiscal year 26 since it's not possible to do it this year.

[03:32:10] Similarly, the 2021 CCAP needs to receive enough funding to move forward if the goals of the program have a chance of meeting the intended time frame. We would further suggest that the county fees be adjusted to reflect the actual cost of services, including solid waste and recycling acceptance, and the county vacuum leaf removal program if it should continue, which we believe should be discontinued.

[03:32:39] We do not at this time approve the consolidation of animal services because of concern it may jeopardize the county's widely respected and copied wildlife services. Last but not least, we are pleased to see at least a small increase for the Parks Department.

[03:32:57] Our parks are a wonderful asset used by many citizens and provide welcome open space for all. As we become more urbanized and populous, the facilities and green space become even more important to our quality of life. To sum up, as you make difficult decisions, we urge that your first priority should be keeping Fairfax County as a premier place to live and work with excellent schools and efficient county services.

[03:33:23] A tall order indeed. And we all know, whether we like it or not, that these things cost money. But in the long run, you get what you pay for, or you suffer with what you didn't pay for. Thank you for your attention and for your service to our community. Thank you, Judith.

[03:33:40] Good night. Speaker number 53 is Anna Lugo. Is Anna Lugo here? Okay. Speaker number 54, Leo Milonowski. If you could come on down closer, and then we will have video testimony.

[03:33:57] speaker 56 is john claringbold um welcome miss lugo good evening chairman mckay and the board of supervisors my name is enna lugo i am here as an individual as well as a county resident since 2003 living in the springfield area some of you know me as officer lugo as i am an animal protection police officer almost 20 years i have a unique view on this proposal as a county resident and and an appo i am concerned about why this change is being addressed slowly but surely everything

[03:34:32] has been going up in price i know the world changes and so does the county the only thing that still gives me peace of mind living in fairfax county is although we are paying more for everything we still

have good services that the county prides themselves on so why would the county want to dismantle a unit that everybody calls the gold standard not only just in our jurisdiction or just in the state but in the entire count country why would any one person want to accept the change of a gold standard versus at least a lesser service the way i see it

[03:35:06] it is getting rid of the doctor and only having the option of being treated by a nurse practitioner while getting charged the same but for less services with the possibility of dismantling the gold standard what is this transition going to look like are we going to have gaps in the services that are provided now is wildlife going to be treated the same way are all the animal cases going to be worked as the law requires how long will it be before the citizens get the services we are used to if this transition happens if this is going to take 18 to 24 months to develop does that mean that the county will be paying for two separate entities at the same time

[03:35:45] has this been taken into account on the budget for this change we are 20 days away from you the board making a permanent decision about this proposal yet we still do not have any of the answers to these questions as a county resident this is concerning to me not only because of so many unanswered questions I have but also because we do not know the long-term cost of this proposal as an AP PO the word gold standard means to me that this is the best system there is and nothing supersedes it that's what means what makes us a unique asset to Fairfax County

[03:36:25] APPLs have so much more training and experience with different aspects of animal loss these animal laws go hand-in-hand with so many other criminal violations that are worked by police officers APPLs are able to identify all these violations due to our training at the Criminal Justice Academy and we have the authority to do something about it we've learned how to identify all these situation and as an instructor of the police department's sexual assault free and empowered program I can say in confidence we've learned how to protect ourselves in the community ACOs get three weeks of basic training in animal control and care will they be able to know how to protect themselves and the

[03:37:04] citizens that we serve without any of these things a PBO's NPPOs join the animal services division to work for animals and the public we do help the people we work for we do provide assistance with food dock crates and houses literature materials and information and education on wildlife we do educate the community on proper ways of caring for different species of domestic and agricultural animals and so much more and we are proud to offer this service if a people's are not providing a specific service to the community it's

[03:37:39] It's because we are not aware of these additional services, and we would gladly add these services to our toolbox. Thank you so much for giving me the chance and the opportunity to talk to you. Thank you very much. Speaker number 54 is Leo Milonowski, and is John Klaringbold here?

[03:38:02] Okay, excellent. And Richard Clayton, if you could come on down closer if you're here, Richard. Welcome, Leo. Thank you. First of all, I've got to say, wow, I've been here since the beginning. I've listened to all these things, and I'm off script right away.

[03:38:18] Housing advocacy, health care, workers, pay equity, natural advocacy, criminal justice. I mean, you guys have your work cut out for you. Good luck. I'm Liam Onowski. I live at 8017 Washington Road in the Holland Hall Village neighborhood in the Fort Hunt area.

[03:38:34] I currently serve as the president of the board there, a volunteer position. We're not an HOA. we have about 700 homes in the neighborhood and we're celebrating our 81st year so we're one of the original developments in in south alexandria i also serve as the chair of the stormwater committee for malverna council government and judy covered it a little bit in her her presentation i'm also known as the p2 s4 the permanent pain and supervisor stork stormwater committee issues So I hope he'll take some of this on with him and help us out.

[03:39:11] I also serve as an ad hoc member of the Environmental Committee for MVCCA. I have five areas of the budget I'd like to address with you this evening, and I'm just going to stick to the script to keep to my time. We are concerned, and the Environmental Committee is concerned, with the planned reorganization of the wildlife services.

[03:39:30] We think it will adversely affect the excellent program that is currently in place. wildlife management and animal protection police officers have historically worked together to provide county wildlife services we also have a deer hunting area right next to holland hall village paul springs park the exact details of the reorg are unclear at this time to the environmental committee and the proposed uh proposal lacks support for many community wildlife experts and environmental organizations our second issue is the ccap our current ccap was published Commission 2021, enlisting many climate and energy projects needed to reach the CCAP goals.

[03:40:10] However, work needed to meet the goals remains in a pilot phase. In its budget resolution that we forwarded to the board, NBCCA recommends that work in this area be expedited and that sufficient funding be applied to reach these goals. Third, we are all happy to see the increased funding for our parks.

[03:40:30] I'm a big supporter of our county parks. and that a portion has been earmarked for invasive weed eradication. I think we all know that the invasive weaves are a problem in our woodlands and maybe even more damaging than infill development on the tree cover in the county.

[03:40:47] We welcome the attention and the funding to attack the problem, but more resources will be needed to address invasive plants in our county parks. We also support broadening the focus beyond just bamboo to a wider set of invasive plants that damage trees. Number four, regarding the County Solid Waste Collection Program, there are two issues.

[03:41:07] Fees for trash, recycling, yard waste removal on county routes do not cover the cost of providing that service and are cross-subsidized from some other budget lines. While the rate for this service has been already set for this budget cycle, serious consideration must be given to fee increases in the next budget or maybe just reclassification of the 2024 budget.

[03:41:27] We also would ask that the county staff be tasked to review the efficiencies and effectiveness of our county's recycling program given recent reports that much of the plastic we put in our recycling containers winds up incinerated or in or in a landfill no matter what container we put it in it's also time for the county to end the separate leaf collection program the program services about five percent of the county residents and again the fees for this service did not cover the collection costs further there are environmental costs the production of of 726 metric tons of carbon dioxide during the collections.

[03:42:05] Fifth and final, and the albatross that I carry, the 25 budget keeps a stormwater fee at its current rate. And as this is a published rate, we understand it cannot be increased. But issues with rain-

driven flooding are increasing in the Mount Vernon district, and I would assume other districts across the county.

[03:42:24] We certainly need revenue streams to address rebuilding and maintaining aging and inadequate stormwater infrastructure. Restoring our streams with an eye towards stream stabilization and TMDL reduction, and most of all, reducing flood risk for homeowners. These three factors have an oversized negative effect in older neighborhoods, especially where stormwater systems were designed upwards of 70 years ago.

[03:42:48] And, of course, with infill development, the reduction of impervious surfaces. Another element that may require additional funding is the long-awaited revision to the county's flood mitigation policy, currently being put together by DPWS.

[03:43:03] Again, we are hopeful that the policy's details will contain meaningful and considerable support to individual homeowners facing rain-driven flooding issues. I would end on this. We are not asking for the board to fix the problems that are self-inflicted by the homeowners, but we are asking for your help through ordinance revisions or policy changes.

[03:43:27] First, where there's inadequate infrastructure and aging infrastructure in place. Second, help should be available in cases where we find inattention or indifference during the permitting process as to how stormwater flows will negatively affect a neighboring property.

[03:43:44] In some cases, inadequate and out-of-date ordinance, regulations, and other practical practices prevent county staff from employing effective methods to stem problems before they happen fixing this problem lays in your purview thanks for your consideration of these issues i have pressing issues but you have many many more pressing issues thank you thank you thank you very much leo uh speaker number 55 we're on uh speaker number 55 lydia lawrence who has submitted video testimony hello my name is lydia lawrence and i am a drainsville district resident and the chair of

[03:44:22] the Fairfax Parks Coalition. For several years, Fairfax Parks Coalition has advocated for a more equitable park system that is accessible to every Fairfax County resident and is a good steward of its natural resources. This year, the coalition appreciates the county executive's proposed FY25 budget that fulfills most of FCPA's funding requests and does not cut anything further from FCPA. We recognize that this level of support would not have been possible without the Board

[03:45:01] of Supervisors' advocacy on behalf of the county's parks, and we thank the county executive for his proposed FY25 budget, and we urge the board to approve the proposed FCPA budget. In recognition of the integral part the board plays in obtaining better funding for FCPA, Fairfax Parks Coalition asked the board to provide budget guidance for FY26 budget on the following. The first is to develop a plan to begin implementing FCPA's equity study recommendation. The coalition asked the

[03:45:40] board to add budget guidance for FY26 that the county and FCPA work together to create a plan on how they can fund implementation of the equity study recommendations. FCPA should work with the county to determine which administrative and technical support requirements of the study could be supported by existing county infrastructure, thereby streamlining the cost proposed in FCPA's presentation. Additionally, the Department of Management and Budget should

[03:46:14] consider diverse funding sources to support implementation of the recommendations. For example, county income from the transient occupancy tax has significantly increased year over year, the

Department of Management and Budget could evaluate how to begin maximizing this task and tie it to funding FCPA's equity needs. Next, we ask that additional general fund supports go towards FCPA's IMA or Invasive Management Area Program. The IMA program does not have the staff

[03:46:51] support required to address the invasive growth throughout the county's 24,000 acres and 420 parks. In FY23 alone, 69 park volunteer site leaders and 5,391 helpers spent 19,663 hours removing invasives at 66 parks. And that's an amazing return on investment. An additional staff member would provide added program stability and enable the IMA program to activate the backlog of

[03:47:28] over 32 IMA leaders waiting for the opportunity to join the program when staff capacity increases. Third, the coalition would like FCPA to develop a plan for language outreach and translation services. We would like to see FCPA continue to build connections with non-English speaking communities through their programs. As a large number of Fairfax County residents do not speak English as their first language, it is fundamental that FCPA plan communication initiatives to connect

[03:48:06] with and draw in these communities. Finally, funding for outreach staff for equitable park access and programming is another budget guidance issue the coalition would like to see the Board supervisors add. Over the last few decades, park supporters have observed a significant decrease in the number of full-time and part-time staff positions that are dedicated to specific parks.

[03:48:33] This has resulted in impaired park maintenance and reduced visitor and staff contact, increasing staffing that reflects the surrounding communities that make parks a safer and more welcoming place for all community members, and doing so would be an avenue to hire more staff that are bilingual and multilingual. FCPA attempted to fill this need with its request for approximately $1.5 million to add additional staffing to the most understaffed parks. Unfortunately, the county

[03:49:08] did not have capacity to meet this request in FY25. We asked the Board of Supervisors to issue budget guidance for FCPA to address this, and for the Department of Management and Budget to fund this need in FY26. Thank you so much for your time, and we look forward to continued partnerships to make our parks the best place for Fairfax County residents. Thank you, Ms. Lawrence. Next, I have John Claringbold, number 56, followed by 57, Richard Clayton, and then Keith Henning,

[03:49:44] you are here as well. Good evening. My name is John Claringbold and I'm the Vice Chair of the McLean Citizens Association Budget and Taxation Committee. Thank you for hearing me today.

[03:50:00] Fairfax County employees participate in three pension plans for employees, police and uniformed staff. Fairfax County public school employees participate in separate county plan and also the state Virginia retirement system. All county plans are short of funds to pay members. Table one shows unfunded liabilities for the four county plans the total exceeds 4.6 billion dollars that is one

[03:50:32] billion dollars more than the real property taxes for 2025. in the 2025 budget papers the county executive indicated it is the county's policy to fully fund the actually determined contributions to the systems and making these investments is crucial to sustaining the financial position of our plans. Despite over two decades of actuarially determined contributions and other changes to eliminate unfunded liabilities, Table 2 shows unfunded liabilities continue to increase.

[03:51:11] Tables 3 and 4 show substantial increases in employer contributions too and the projected maximum future employer contribution rate for the three county plans. Table 5 shows the date by which

the three cloudy plans will be fully funded moves further into the future despite rising payments. Chart one shows amortisation payments are near 20 per cent of salary for the ERS

[03:51:42] and exceed 20 per cent for both URS and PORS. This has a significant impact on funds available for salary payments for all county staff. On March 6, 2024, McLean Citizens Association asked the Board of Supervisors and County staff to commission a stress test like that used by VRS and to explore other ways to make the County's pension plans more financially sustainable.

[03:52:14] On April 11, 2024, Chairman Mackay and Supervisors Palczyk and Beerman responded, noting the VRS stress test provides a lot of helpful data and projections relating to future investment returns, funding levels and contributions and that staff is recommending to the boards that similar stress tests be conducted for each of Fairfax's three systems. Considering the significant impact over $4.6 billion of unfunded liabilities has on the county budget and the future risk to

[03:52:50] citizens, taxpayers, I thank the supervisors for their response and strongly support the staff recommendation. I trust the Board of Supervisors will ensure that the recommendation is acted upon as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and attention. Thank you. Next we have number 57, Richard Clayton. He's here. And Keith Henning, are you here? Okay. If you can move down to be prepared and then we will

[03:53:24] have number 59, Timmy Wandongwari. Thank you so much for the chance to speak with you all today. I represent For Public Education, a local nonprofit that is dedicated to furthering the goals and aspirations of our public school system.

[03:53:39] We appreciate the sizable proportion of the overall budget that's given to our public schools, 51.4%. But you have to ask yourself what justifies this? And of course our first job as a society is to educate our children and look to the future. But as I sit in the audience for a few hours listening to many people looking for ways to address their particular aspect of their particular set of requests and problems. Education, of course, is one of the most strategic short and long-term investments we can make to address virtually every one of the issues that I've heard brought before you today.

[03:54:15] So our first ask is that the proportion of the budget that is dedicated to public education be increased to its historic level, which has been about 52 to 53 percent over the last 20 years. I know that's a small percentage, but a lot of money, but it's well invested. I don't have to tell you that businesses and entrepreneurs come to our area for skilled and talented workforce. I also don't have to tell you that our teachers are underpaid versus our local competitors and in our in our neighbors our neighboring jurisdictions and we have a larger class size. These are small

[03:54:50] deficits but they accumulate and can affect other people's decision-making in terms of where they locate for their businesses. I want my kids to stay here I want to have great education a great job on the state. Our second ask and sort of like everybody else who's come before you, is that we need more revenue.

[03:55:08] I know not everybody likes taxes, but there must be other ways. And I know that you've looked into these, but I ask for a task force looking for new revenue sources. And I also hope that we can find a way to address the LCI, which seems to drain so much of our resources for the rest of the state.

[03:55:25] More of our tax money needs to stay here. So after I testify to here today, the four public education staff and I will be going to Richmond to address the second largest source of public school

funding. And what we've heard from the JLARC study is that it's woefully underfunded by the state level, and we'll be working at that level too.

[03:55:44] Thank you for your time. All right, thank you. As we transition, 58, Keith Henning, followed by Tammy Wondon-Wari. She's accessible, and next will be Norm Hall.

[03:56:01] If you can please be ready to speak. Thank you. All right, let's change the world. Here we go. When I read the proposed budget, I was beyond excited to see that $215 million investment in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure.

[03:56:19] However, that excitement was quickly dashed when I saw the budget also included wasting $1.6 billion in capital roadway improvements, specifically lengthening and widening roadways, pretty much all of which is in and around Tyson's, which already has a metro, and we're trying to make it more walkable.

[03:56:36] So it's things like widening 123 to eight lanes. Adding lanes is the most useless way to relieve traffic ingestions. All it does is put more cars on the road. Thereby, it accomplishes nothing. Additionally, it adds more lane miles of roadway that must be maintained, thereby increasing costs to the county in the future.

[03:56:58] It's the exact opposite of an investment. It's spending money now so that we have to spend more money in the future. It all achieves absolutely nothing, and it makes our lives worse because of construction traffic, noise, polluted air, which leads to higher health care costs.

[03:57:16] Putting the cash into a big pile and setting it on fire would literally be a better use of the money. Alternatively, in addition to mass transit, cycling infrastructure would be a great investment for multiple reasons. One is it's way cheaper to maintain than roads.

[03:57:35] It also would replace car users, getting them off the roads, therefore making our cost of maintaining the already excessive car infrastructure much cheaper. Additionally, it gets more people active and reduces air pollution, which also reduces health care costs. For every dollar invested in cycling infrastructure, it's estimated you save between $2 and $35 on the other costs, depending on where the infrastructure project is.

[03:58:00] I dare you to find any other public work investment with a 35x return on investment. Fairfax County is also uniquely set up to be a cycling haven. Most car trips are less than four miles in distance, which is about a 12-minute ride on a cheap e-bike.

[03:58:17] The county is essentially different pockets of high-density, high-economic development with residential areas in between. So the difference from one area to the next is pretty much always less than 10 miles. So you can think, going from Tysons to Merrifield, Merrifield to Fairfax, Fairfax Chantilly, you get the idea.

[03:58:36] On an e-bike, this ride would take 10 minutes on a short end and 30 minutes for the epic journey from Tysons to Reston. Good luck getting to Reston from Tysons at 5 p.m. on a Thursday. As a cycle commuter, people tell me they admire my dedication to fitness.

[03:58:54] The reality is I just hate traffic and I'm not patient. Most days, my cycle commutes about the same amount of time as driving. Some days, it's actually shorter. It's also way more predictable. It's also very satisfying to ride past standstill traffic with all these drivers experiencing their freedom trapped inside their cars.

[03:59:16] It's an issue that both Democrats and Republicans should be able to agree upon. It enhances equity for all. It's better for the climate, and it'll stop the government from wasting billions in taxpayer money. Thank you.

[03:59:32] Thank you very much. We are on speaker number 59, Tammy Wong Dong Ware, and I presume speakers 60, 61, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are all part of the same testimony, but I will call each one of them individually just in case I'm wrong.

[03:59:56] Welcome, Tammy. Good evening, Chairman McKay, Board of Supervisors, and County Executive, Mr. Hill. I'm Tammy Wandong. I'm a frontline worker, and this will be 35 years of public service on June 29, 2024.

[04:00:16] I currently work as a social service specialist in adult and aging. I'm also the proud re-elected president of the Fairfax chapter of SEIU Virginia 512. SEIU Virginia 512 members are your frontline essential county workers.

[04:00:38] We are administrative workers, social workers, librarians, child care providers, sanitation workers, mental health workers, nurses, engineers, court clerks, and countless of other essential workers.

[04:00:55] We were essential workers long before COVID-19. We serve our communities with pride. Due to the rising cost of living, it is becoming more and more difficult to perform the work we have been hired to do because of case overloads.

[04:01:15] We are not able to provide the time and attention needed for many of the clients because we must keep on top of the incoming cases assigned. In my division, Adult and Aging, some of our clients require more time for case management and assigning services due to their specific needs.

[04:01:37] As you know, we are understaffed. As new workers are hired, they must be trained to DFS standards before they can be released to the community. Most of our members have taken on a second job to meet the expenses in their daily living.

[04:01:55] A host of our members live outside of the county. For those members who live within Fairfax County, they too are stretched beyond measure in keeping up with the rising costs of their daily expenses.

[04:02:12] We have asked and expressed our reasons at prior town halls with you that we need the full market rate to live the quality of life that we also ensure the residents of our county. Without the needed raises, we are essentially taking a pay cut as we work increasingly harder to meet the growing work assignments.

[04:02:38] For our workers without health benefits, we are hopeful soon that they would no longer have to grapple the decisions of working sick or losing pay when they are off from their jobs.

[04:02:56] This now brings me to talk a bit about collective bargaining. Our organizers and members have continuously been working with the general workers to obtain signatures for us to get to the 30% that is required to get to the bargaining table.

[04:03:14] We have been trained in collective bargaining. We know the impact that it will bring to the workforce. We know that wages, benefits, and working conditions are the elements that are essential for a contract to be ratified. our ask for you is to pay the full amount of the 4.1 percent as it was advertised we know it will not solve the issue of inflation but it is a step in the right direction as you have heard seen and heard there is a purple wave that we call a blitz happening in fairfax county our sister chapters

[04:03:48] have come from afar to assist us in getting the work done we are in our second week we will hit the remaining numbers of our signatures that are required, we too will soon join the forces of our police, firefighters, and teachers in enjoying the benefits that collective bargaining brings. Again, we thank you for your service. We look forward to working with all of you. Now, you will hear from a few of our members who will share their stories. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[04:04:19] Speaker number 60. Speaker number 60 is Norm Hall. Welcome. Good evening. I am pleased to speak out on the FY 2025 Fairfax County budget as a longtime Vienna resident, a county employee, and a labor leader affiliated with both the Employee Advisory Council and this true union.

[04:04:43] Based on my conversations with Fairfax County workers, I have five budget comments. One, our highest priority is the call for MRA increases of 4.10%. With record inflation affecting families across Virginia, we must provide a rate of pay that is reflective of the rising cost of living.

[04:05:05] There is currently $2.6 million unused in the budget for the year. This money needs to go to the workers who have historically been sacrificing to move the county forward. Two, there should be a higher 5% minimum increase for non-merit system staff who don't get fringe benefits.

[04:05:23] Three, appoint a committee with union seats for hiring and retention bonuses using the $2.6 million fund stated in the budget. Perhaps you recall me mentioning this during last year's carryover discussions. Four, provide pay adjustments for mid-level supervisors who have a role in honoring the county's collective bargaining ordinance and agreements once they are applicable.

[04:05:48] It's important that these in-the-middle employees know the county understands their situation. Right now, middle-level employees are underrepresented during pay deliberations. Let's change this together. 5. Revisit compression pay adjustments for those whose pay adjustments were affected by the 60% pay band cap.

[04:06:10] Compression pay adjustments are not uniform. My employment shifted during the pandemic from the daycare center teacher to a transit administrative assistant. While the DOT adjusted my pay due to 17 years of transit experience, I have been expecting to learn about comparable increases by NCS.

[04:06:28] My after-school daycare colleagues have yet to see benchmark pay results as expected, which would support equitable pay. Dissension follows when workers receive inequitable pay. Please show how valuable all workers are in meeting Fairfax County's complex needs.

[04:06:50] During budget town halls, I raised concerns with three members of the Board of Supervisors about how SAC is still operating below pre-pandemic levels of service and generating less revenue for the county as a result. Nobody outside of NCS follows county child care issues more than I do.

[04:07:08] Finding quality child care should not be synonymous with hitting the lottery. If there is no child care, how do we maintain the quality workforce? Please, help me organize a meeting to clarify the county's budget access to facilities, staffing, and compensation plans for all child care workers to ensure these needs, which were recently identified in the DFS report on women and girls, that they will be fully met now, during FY25, and during future years.

[04:07:34] Thank you. Thank you, Norm. Speaker number 61 is Maria Padmore. Thank you, Norm. Greetings, Chairman McKay, Vice Chairwoman Smith, and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[04:07:51] I am honored for the opportunity to speak on behalf of my co-workers at Fairfax County Health Department, CEIU Virginia 512, my family, and myself. As a human service assistant for almost 20 years here in Fairfax County, I have three roles in my job.

[04:08:14] I am a car seat instructor for low-income families. I connect clients to counties' multiple resources because when they enter the health department, our clients need more than just health care.

[04:08:32] And my favorite part of my job, which is the closest to my heart, is being able to be the bridge between our non-English speaking residents and providers as a community interpreter.

[04:08:48] My name is Maria Jose Padmore, and by now I hope you can tell that I love my job and provide the utmost level of care to our residents. My supervisor even says that I am the hardest working employee she has.

[04:09:10] I was born a diabetic, and due to the way this chronic illness affects my immune system, I have to inject three different types of insulins and take a total of 13 medications daily.

[04:09:28] And I see a lot of specialists to survive, resulting in me spending almost half of my income on my health care expenses. This affects me and my family.

[04:09:43] My beautiful daughter over there, she's currently majoring in criminology with criminal law in society and a minor at George Mason University. A journey that will take her six years to complete, even though she works full-time for Fairfax County Public Schools as a special education teacher while she goes to school full-time.

[04:10:13] Fortunately, her salary is not enough to pay for her education, and I cannot afford to support her with my salary.

[04:10:31] Our current salaries include the cost of living increase cannot keep up with inflation, which means we are actually making less money and 2% increase will not cover our living expenses, especially for a human service assistant like me who have not seen an increase in my pay grade in over a decade.

[04:10:59] Our salaries are way behind other counties in more than one way. We need a fully funded MRA of 4.1, please let me finish, to keep up with inflation. Right now, the county is banking on maintaining a high caliber of employees, which keeping the average salary low.

[04:11:22] No wonder we can keep losing employees and co-workers. At the health department, I work with nurses with PhD, family assistant workers and admin workers that have master's degrees. And HSAs like me, who are retired doctors, borough supervisors, Fairfax County Health Department treats these residents well, with residents very good with respect and consideration.

[04:11:50] Today, I ask you to do the same for us through adequate pay. How can we progress if we cannot afford to leave? Every county worker deserves to earn a liable wage, regardless of their pre-existing condition, like me, or the type of job that they do.

[04:12:15] Thank you for listening to my story today, and I look forward to seeing you take action to address the concerns of this multiracial, multilingual, multicultural family of workers from the county and members of SEIU Virginia 512.

[04:12:41] Thank you. Our next speaker is David Harris. And I'm going to ask everyone, please be conscious of your time.

[04:12:56] I have to be fair to everyone who walks in this building. So let's try to stick to our time if we can. David Harris, welcome. Good evening, everybody. I'm David Harris. I am a maintenance crew chief at Area 1 for the Park Authority.

[04:13:16] I haven't had really a chance to prepare a speech, but like I said, I've been here 11 years, and we do a lot of work, and we go out, we plow snow, we leave our families at home at night and plow snow, we work overtime cutting grass, we do a lot of different things in the parks, and we cover the ball fields for your kids and grandkids, and you probably use the parks as well.

[04:13:48] beautiful parts but our work staff is short we don't have enough people and some of the people that we have are very good and they are retiring and then some of the people that we have are moving on i mean i've been here for 11 years and i lived in the county the first four years of my employment but i had to move out of the county i couldn't afford it and being a single father that's a big issue for me. And I'm sure you guys can understand that. So what I'm saying is no one

[04:14:24] at the county is asking to be a millionaire, but we want our proper share. And I think we deserve that. We've been here. We do whatever is needed to be done. And we're proud to be Fairfax County employees. But it's hard to make ends meet sometimes. It really is. So I think you guys can do a little bit better or look out for us and that's about all i have to say i'm gonna leave it up to you and your conscience but i think you know where i'm coming from thank you thank you

[04:14:56] here is alissa green good evening supervisors i'd like to speak as the secretary of seiu virginia 512 fairfax chapter and as a fairfax county care worker as a sac teacher and supervisor i directly see how short staffing is negatively affecting the quality of services we provide our residents. Our few remaining teachers are constantly burnt out from being forced to work multiple 12-hour days per month, sometimes back-to-back. We regularly leave our own center

[04:15:34] short-staffed to cover even more short-staffed centers, and we frequently have to work through illness and major personal events. Despite the county's claim to value equity, staff are often unable to even celebrate important cultural holidays because we have children for over 11 hours on those days, and if every staff member who celebrates Eid or Diwali takes off, our program can't operate within licensing ratios. All this leaves us exhausted and unable to provide the quality care and programming to our students that our families have come to rely on. In the past, we've pushed through difficult budget seasons, fueled by the love of the families we work with

[04:16:11] and the care we provide, but today that is no longer enough. I have conversations almost daily with ncs staff who are forced to resign from jobs they love or retire early because those jobs don't allow for them to care for themselves and their families beyond failing county staff we're also failing county families our lack of teachers means many centers are only able to accept a fraction of children who need care and the children we do accept are getting teachers who are stretched way too thin to provide the attention and enrichment they deserve if we meaningfully invest in staffing

[04:16:45] today, we could serve more families and generate up to $21 million more in annual revenue to fund other essential county initiatives. When speaking with seasoned SAC teachers who know many other skilled child care workers, not one of them said they would advise anyone qualified that they care about to apply to work for Fairfax County. Five or more years ago, they likely would have, but being a Fairfax County employee has quickly become synonymous with being overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated. Our most recent NCS staff survey even quantified that the morale is at an

[04:17:19] all-time low. Simply funding the 4.1% recommended MRA is not going to fix that. Struggling residents and workers in Fairfax County desperately need and deserve so much more just to keep their heads above water. However, not funding the bare minimum MRA sends a message loud and clear to our residents and workers that in a tight budget season, it's our needs and well-being that are the first to get cut on the chopping block. We know we are drastically underfunded by the state. We know we are still recovering from a post-COVID economy. We as staff want to help build the county back.

[04:17:58] Invest in your staff, and we can invest in Fairfax County. Thank you. Speaker 64 is Lauren Tumbleson. Be able to sing like the other people did earlier, or be as boisterous as the guy with the cycling stuff, but I'm really, I just want to go home and lay on my left side, I'm tired, but this is important.

[04:18:31] Last year I talked about, I'm not sure if we can have a second child because we can't afford it, and we got the MRA that we fought for, so thank you for that. And this year I'm asking for the same thing. So I have a baby and I'm like, okay, I can trust you to give us the MRA because, you know, it's expensive.

[04:18:55] But hello, esteemed members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, fellow residents, my dedicated coworkers. Today I stand before you not just as a social worker, but as a voice for change, a voice for empowerment and a voice for fairness.

[04:19:12] My message is simple yet profound. it's time to break the cycle. Invest in us. It's a cycle of injustice, so don't do that. Invest in us as you've invested in yourself. The cost of living in Fairfax continues to soar, leaving hardworking individuals and families like mine struggling to make ends meet. As a dedicated social worker providing home-delivered meals, I witness firsthand the challenges faced by our community members every day and empowerment through unionizing is not just a concept it's

[04:19:47] a pathway to dignity and respect for workers i am grateful that here in fairfax county we have the right to unionize and i don't want to lose my spot okay sorry i lost my spot and i appreciate the board of directors support for this fundamental right and by standing together we have the collective power to negotiate for fair wages better benefits and improve working conditions and it's time for you all to stand by your commitment to support our unionization efforts and work alongside us to address the challenges that we face at the same time.

[04:20:20] I speak from personal experience when I say that a lack of a full MRA and high benefits has deeply affected me and my family. Not fully funding the MRA this year will have a direct impact on our daily lives, and it really means limited options for child care, which I know you guys talked about before, as child care is really expensive, it's forcing us to make some tough decisions. Should I stay home? Should I quit my job? Should my husband figure something out? Like we've talked to the EAP who've done family counseling. We've rearranged things. My son has these special interests. He's four and a half. I didn't want to bring him tonight because I couldn't chase after

[04:20:58] him this time. But he has special interests that I don't think we can afford to like accommodate and get him experience in we've had to redo our budget prioritizing essentials like our mortgage and groceries I think it's really unfair the businesses can like continue to charge all of us extra money and here we have to sit here all night long and talk about a budget when they can just charge whatever they want to charge at the grocery store anyway every dollar counts which you know which you know we find ourselves scouring for used baby items oh it's been three minutes

[04:21:35] because buying new is simply out of reach, so the cost of child care for two children is incomprehensible, leaving us with few options. I just want to say thank you because your decisions really affect every family like mine. Thanks. Thank you. Speaker 65 is President Thomas. You're 68. Okay.

[04:22:08] Welcome, President. Thank you, Chair McKay. Good evening, Chair McKay, Vice Chair Smith, members of the Board of Supervisors and County Executive Heal. I am Lenorel Thomas, and I'm proud to serve as president of SCIU Virginia 512.

[04:22:26] I have been on the great commonwealth of Virginia for the past 15 years, and for the last seven years, I've had a front row seat to the life of a Fairfax County employee, my husband, who just came from his shift.

[04:22:42] You see, as a wife of a frontline and essential juvenile probation counselor, I hear so much of what Tammy, Norm, Maria, David, Lauren, and Elisa have shared this evening. I hear about the risk family services workers face as they provide services in our community. I hear about how married and non-married employees are impacted by budget decisions and wage compression. I also hear Maria's story about how a mom and daughter are faced with tough decisions because the cost of

[04:23:20] living continues to rise, but the raises aren't matching. And then short staffing. I hear about that a lot because it impacts quality services, but it also impacts quality of life and overall morale. I know many of you have the best intentions for county employees, but I have to tell you that our members face challenges daily that need to be addressed and the need is not being met.

[04:23:48] Some of these challenges should be a simple fix, while we know others will take strategy and planning, and we are more than willing to get down, push up our sleeves, and work with you all to do that. Fully funding the MRA has to be a priority.

[04:24:04] Too many county employees are struggling to balance financial demands with rising inflation. A 2% MRA will not keep up with inflation, not even close. I implore you to fully fund the MRA at 4.1% or higher.

[04:24:24] Fully funding the MRA will also help alleviate other challenges, such as short staffing and wage compression. County employees need to take care of themselves so that they can show up and provide the services our community depends on and show up for their families. There are countless evenings that my husband comes home exhausted because he is serving the community of Fairfax County and dealing with children, and he has children of his own that he wants to have energy to pour into.

[04:24:54] County employees deserve that opportunity. We hear from SAC employees, court employees, family services, and so many others who can't use their leave because they don't want to leave their coworkers short-staffed. Why are employees trying to figure out how to manage the schedule to take time away to protect their mental health?

[04:25:15] Employees are also faced with a tough choice when they try to move positions in the county because who wants to let go of a great employee? So as employees try to advance their careers, they're often told no because their manager, when they get that phone call, hey, such and such applied for a job over here. I can't let them go because of short staffing.

[04:25:38] That's not fair. So we need you all, the Board of Supervisors, to respect and value the workers that do the jobs that make our quality of life possible. We need you to fully fund the MRA, work to address

wage compression, and ensure health care is affordable for county employees.

[04:25:59] In addition to working with us on this budget, we look forward to working with you on collective bargaining and to negotiate a contract that will ensure good union jobs and quality public services for all families. Thank you all so much for your time this evening.

[04:26:16] Thank you. Thank you very much. And our next speaker is speaker number 66, Scott Hoffman. Okay.

[04:26:36] Speaker number 67, Lou DeLeonardo. Is speaker number 67, Lou DeLeonardo here? DeLeonardo. Don't see anyone coming forward.

[04:26:51] Speaker number 68, Hugh Iwanicki. I can help you with that. So my name is Hugh Iwantake. That's like I want a key to open a door so you'll never forget again. So this is my first time ever speaking in front of you, and I want to start out with the praises.

[04:27:12] First, I want to send a praise to Supervisor Herity. We have met several times before, and I want to personally thank you for your efforts in educating county residents about the massive tax increases over the years and your efforts in trying to limit those tax increases.

[04:27:28] The next praise is Supervisor Walkinshaw. We haven't met before, although I hope that we will have the opportunity to meet soon in the future. I wanted to thank you, Supervisor Walkinshaw, for the help I received from your Chief of Staff, Frank Anderson, in addressing a constituent concern, one of which I will talk about in just a moment.

[04:27:49] Over the past few years, I have talked with my neighbors in the Braddock District, where I lived for 16 years, and more recently in Springfield, over the proposed 7% increase in combined real estate taxes and assessments. This year's increase comes on top of a 56% increase over the past 10 years.

[04:28:09] Fairfax County residents are stretched to the breaking point. Many of my neighbors are retirees on a fixed income and are concerned about the lack of affordability in Fairfax County. The question that my neighbors and I are asking is, what are we getting in return for these massive tax increases?

[04:28:29] Crime is up, our schools including student test scores are down, and we see the unavoidable eyesore of poor maintenance of our county buildings. On October 19th, I went to the government center here to fill out paperwork to be an election officer.

[04:28:47] On the way back to my car, my foot fell into a giant pothole that the county later measured as being 136 feet long and had been there for over three years. I broke my ankle on that pothole and required surgery. Only after repeated requests and over two months and direct intervention by Supervisor Walkinshaw's office did facilities finally repair the giant hole.

[04:29:13] Kudos to Frank Anderson. If it wasn't for our efforts, there is no doubt that other folks would have been injured. So again, this raises the question, where is the money going? These property taxes are not sustainable. A good friend of mine, her family had lived in Fairfax County on the same plot of land since the 1700s, probably around 1742.

[04:29:37] She is on a fixed income, and as a direct result of the crushing tax increases, she had to sell her ancestral homestead. My friend was devastated. She moved out of Fairfax County, and now I don't see her anymore. I am a CPA, and I would like to help look for ways to cut spending.

[04:29:58] But you don't need me. You have Pat Herity sitting right there next to you. Pat and his staff will be glad to help the board find savings through spending cuts. The Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance is also another resource that can help.

[04:30:14] The information is out there. What is needed is the backbone to do the right thing. As I close, I wanted to mention how often I read in your newsletters about your concern for affordable housing in Fairfax. If that is truly your concern, then do the right thing and do not raise our taxes.

[04:30:31] If you decide to go ahead and raise them anyway, and we read later on about your supposed concern over affordable housing, then all of us will know that it was all a lie. Thank you again for your time. Thank you. Speaker number 69 is Felicia Woods, who has submitted video testimony.

[04:30:54] I'm Felicia Woods. I have the pleasure of serving on Fairfax County's Commission for Women. On behalf of the CFW, I'd like to thank the county executives and the Board of Supervisors for your thoughtful approach to this year's budget process, and I am grateful for the opportunity to provide CFW's testimony.

[04:31:19] Also, thank you for your transparency and community education on this year's budget. The various in-person and virtual town halls are necessary to ensure that the community understands the process and remains informed. Recently, CFW, along with the county and researchers from UVA issued a study entitled Gains, Goals, and Gaps.

[04:31:43] This study focused on the multifaceted challenges women face in the county and looked through an intersectional lens to show the many disparities across economics, health, and work-life balance domains. The study found wage gaps are persistent, along with disparities in access to quality health care, and that work-life balance remains an issue for many women as the cost of child care continues to rise, along with the need to have more flexible employment.

[04:32:15] This proposed budget would ensure that those facing the barriers identified in Gains, Goals, and Gaps study will have the resources needed to ensure that the county reduces these burdens and decreases disparities for both women and girls.

[04:32:31] The proposed budget increases in HHS aligns the CFW's commitment to advancing the status of women and girls, namely behavioral health navigation, additional school-age child care rooms, and significant investments in school readiness activities.

[04:32:49] So as you consider to this budget, CFW asks that you consider the need for continual investments into affordable housing, given how important it is to keeping families living in our county and to maintain the rich diversity that Fairfax shares.

[04:33:08] Please also consider greater commitments to more community-based, easily accessible mental health services. And lastly, but most important, there is a dire need in our county for more affordable, high-quality child care.

[04:33:24] Lack of child care places a significant burden on working families that are really just trying to make ends meet. So many of the global gender equality hurdles that the world is facing, according to the United Nations Women's Report, are very prevalent in our own county and our own backyard.

[04:33:44] We are seeing increased levels of poverty, lack of economic opportunities, workplace discrimination and inequalities, inadequate access to education and health care, food insecurity, violence

against women and girls, and lack of women in leadership.

[04:34:03] This is why targeted investments in women and girls are critical to achieving gender equality and equity. I am grateful for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of CFW, and I appreciate that every budget season, you all make tough decisions on how to allocate county resources.

[04:34:23] So as you continue your deliberations, I hope that you would consider the need for increased investments in affordable quality child care, housing, domestic and sexual violence programs, as well as making sure that there are women and girls in leadership opportunities and that there are development processes for them, too.

[04:34:46] Thank you again for all that you do on behalf of women and girls. Thank you. And we are now on speaker 70. Fitzhugh Hoggard. Fitzhugh here. Okay, 71 is Linda Byrne. I know Linda is here. She will be followed by Linda Baker and Beth Axelrod. If I called your name, please come down closer so that we're ready to hear your testimony. We are on speaker 71. Linda Byrne, welcome.

[04:35:16] I'm here for parks and for libraries, actually books. And actually, I'm not going to say much myself. I want to play for you a video done by members of our community who are younger.

[04:35:36] And I saw you had a 14-year-old, and I think that's really great testifying. Anyway, these girls are younger. They're up in New York trying to get on Broadway. Couldn't be here this evening, so here we go. Is it playing for you?

[04:36:01] No. We'll get that fixed. Do I do anything else? Riley, what's up? How was school? It was fine. So, what are we working on today? I don't know. I have a book record.

[04:36:18] Alright, a book record. Do you have a book? It's online.

[04:36:30] Let's get started. The first paragraph is about the summary, so why don't you come up with some sentences about what it's about?

[04:36:49] I don't know. We'll work here together.

[04:37:05] Why don't you try and write it out? Why don't you talk about how Julia wants to join the art club, but worried about people's opinions? What do you think about that? Does it make sense to put in paragraph three the thing about his dad?

[04:37:29] Oh, just until, yeah, for sure, telling his dad off. It's great.

[04:37:55] Are you starting to get a note, Lord? How do you spell an... Oh, antagonist? Let's sound it up. Um, I forgot how to spell.

[04:38:15] Let's just sound it up. Gunness. Perfect. How's school been doing? Like, how's the workload? How are the rest of your classes going?

[04:38:30] Like, your workload? How do you manage that? A lot. I'm both fine. I have a C in math, but... Okay. You can work on that if you want to. Okay. Of course. It's...

[04:38:45] Thank you.

[04:39:05] I also have brought you popcorn and a copy of that. So you can go home, watch it with your families. thank you very much thank you thank you so much linda uh appreciate you and uh appreciate

you hanging with us tonight oh thank you and uh speaker number 72 linda baker is linda baker here um how about beth axelrod beth axelrod is here in a speaker number 73 welcome

[04:39:40] Dear Chairman McKay and members of the board, thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Beth Axelrod, and I'm a Fairfax County resident and a wildlife rehabilitator permitted by both the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and the United Department of Fish and Wildlife Service.

[04:40:05] I'm also the president of Wildlife Rescue League, a community-based nonprofit organization whose mission includes the support of wildlife rehabilitation in northern Virginia and surrounding areas. With 175 volunteers and 50 partnering wildlife rehabilitators, apprentices, and care providers, we are in our 40th year of providing wildlife rehabilitation services to Fairfax County.

[04:40:33] Our programs include the operation of a wildlife assistance helpline, the rescue and transport of sick, injured, and orphaned wildlife to home-based wildlife rehabilitators and wildlife centers, and public education to include the creation of wildlife-themed videos currently in use by Prince William County's Scholastic Environmental Literacy Program.

[04:40:57] Our wildlife helpline accepts over 6,000 calls every year from the public. Last year, 1,850 of those calls were from Fairfax County, representing 37% of the total calls. We understand the controversy and concerns that surround the proposed consolidation of the current animal protection police officers to become animal control officers under the auspices of the Department of Animal Sheltering.

[04:41:27] The wildlife community is diverse, and no one person can speak for everyone. So while I don't purport to do that, what I can say is that close to 80% of the respondents to a recent survey we sent to our area rehabilitators and Fairfax County volunteers were in favor of the consolidation.

[04:41:48] We have spoken to every Fairfax County shelter director over the past 15 years, and by far the current director, Risa Currier, has been the most receptive to the idea better collaboration between wildlife rehabilitation wildlife rehabilitators and animal control therefore on behalf of the Board of Directors of Wildlife Rescue League I would like to state the following WRL has excellent relationships with many of the Fairfax County animal protection police officers and appreciates the steps they take to ensure that wildlife is cared for in the

[04:42:27] best way possible for each individual situation we do not want to see any of of them disadvantaged by a change to their employment. That said, we also cannot ignore what we perceive to be the benefits that would occur for wildlife if the consolidation were to occur.

[04:42:47] As a support organization, WRL works with shelters and animal control agencies in multiple jurisdictions to include Fairfax, Arlington, Prince William, and Loudoun counties in the city of Alexandria. With the exception of Fairfax County, every one of those jurisdictions have civilian employed animal control officers that function effectively as intended to provide animal control services as well as community support and education.

[04:43:16] We have seen no evidence to indicate that Fairfax County would not be able to do the same. WRL has been expressing the desire for years to have better communication and collaboration between officers in the field and Wildlife Rescue League's helpline and Rehabilitators when picking up wildlife.

[04:43:35] Currently, only 9% of wildlife picked up by Fairfax County Animal Protection Police are taken to wildlife rehabilitators, whereas the rate of Loudoun County is over 30% and Arlington County over 60%.

[04:43:53] We feel that this needs to improve. One, the rate of euthanasia in Fairfax County is also higher than Loudoun and Arlington Counties. WRL's helpline has experienced several situations this year alone where a healthy animal was either euthanized or threatened to be euthanized that was clearly a candidate for rehabilitation.

[04:44:18] The administration of euthanasia to wildlife in the field is inconsistent and we believe that animals should not be unnecessarily euthanized. Should the consolidation occur, we understand that an advisory committee for wildlife, similar to the current Animal Services Advisory Committee will be created.

[04:44:38] This committee is necessary to provide oversight and accountability to the control of wildlife. Many Fairfax County APPOs are professional, empathetic, and resourceful when it comes to wildlife issues. WRL has no concern with those employees or how they are managed and has nothing but good things to say about that process.

[04:45:00] However, Fairfax County needs to improve the services it provides to accommodate wildlife. And if the police department, with its separate mission and rotational management model, is not the department that can achieve this improvement, then we believe that the consolidation should proceed.

[04:45:19] WRL does not see any negative impacts to wildlife in the long term if this occurs. To the contrary, this change would offer new opportunities for the wildlife rehabilitation community to collaborate with Fairfax County on effective and humane wildlife response.

[04:45:35] Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Axelrod. Thank you for your testimony. And that brings us to the end of our speakers list of April 17, 2024. The board will stand in recess until we reconvene at 3 p.m. tomorrow for day three of public hearings.

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