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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Budget Public Hearing, Thursday, April 24, 2025

Date Thursday, April 24, 2025
Place Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Virginia
Length 5h 4m (video)

- Official meeting video (Fairfax County): <https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/3778>
- Official Board of Supervisors page (Fairfax County): <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-30. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:08] Welcome, everyone, to the board auditorium. And before we get started, I just want to announce Supervisor Alcorn represents Fairfax County on the Metro Board and is on his way here from a Metro Board meeting. And so that's why you don't see him at this point. And before I read the rules for testimony, I just want to start our meeting by acknowledging that there were two significant concerning events that happened in Fairfax County yesterday.

[00:00:36] And, you know, having heard a lot of the stuff in the media and having an opportunity to talk to our chief and our school officials, you know, I want to tell you that there were some real heroes yesterday and a lot of things to be grateful for. First, at West Potomac High School, and this sits very close to me personally for a lot of reasons, and I know Supervisor Stork and Lusk.

[00:00:57] I do want to thank our police team, our SRO, our SRO who was in the school when that incident happened, as well as all the support team from FCPS who's working with the students through what was a really challenging day yesterday and is going to be a challenging time moving forward.

[00:01:16] And I want to say from a gratefulness standpoint that the kids, the juveniles involved in this all survived and, you know, we'll live to see another day. and we're very fortunate for that and there was a particular hero I'm not going to mention him at this point because it's still early who works at West Potomac High School who put his own life at risk to intervene to protect the kids in that school and so I

just want us to reflect on that Secondly, there was a tragic police involved incident in the other part of the county

[00:01:54] just as we were starting our public hearing last night and I think we all know about that incident and two of our officers who were shot doing what was a routine vehicle stop for expired tags and turned into and escalated extraordinarily quickly into something very, very dangerous.

[00:02:15] And I just want to praise the officers who were involved in that incident, talk about heroes. There was one particular officer whose intervention absolutely likely saved the lives of some of our police officers. And the good news, there's really not any good news out of this, but the good news is both of those officers have been treated and released from the hospital and are healing.

[00:02:38] But just another one of those moments of how proud we are of our public safety personnel, our Fairfax County public school partners, and our community in a lot of ways who dealt with some tough issues yesterday and dealt with them with the most dignity you could expect and textbook response.

[00:02:58] And so if we could just keep all the folks who were involved in those incidents and their families and our thoughts and prayers, I would appreciate that. And with that, this is our last day of public hearings on the FY2026 advertised budget plan, the advertised capital improvement program, CIP, for fiscal years 2026 to 2030, and the FY2025 third quarter review.

[00:03:21] During this public hearing, we will also accept testimony on the FY2026 effective tax rate and other tax rates. For public hearing testimony, you're given three minutes to speak as an individual. If you are the spokesperson for a group, you are given five minutes. We have a lengthy speakers list today, and after which we hear from everyone who has signed up on the speakers list ahead of time, including those who submitted videos. For folks who are in the auditorium and have not yet registered to speak today yet, please come down and sign in to the clerk, who's on my far right on your left, to make sure that you get registered.

[00:03:58] Individuals who would like to speak by telephone but have not registered in advance, of course, can still call in at the end of the public speakers list today that's been published. And that call in number is 703-324-1020.

[00:04:14] Again, 703-324-1020. 1020. And with that, I do have, just for public information, 70 speakers who have signed up in advance to testify. And so I'd encourage everyone to please be respectful of the time at the podium when you hear the buzzer, see the red light, your speaking time is up. We want to make sure that at a reasonable hour, we can hear from as many people as possible this afternoon and evening. And with that, I am going to call our first speaker, which is Kenneth Russell. Kenneth is here to be followed by Peggy Cook and Corazon Sandoval Foley in that order. Welcome, Mr. Russell.

[00:04:53] Thank you, sir. Three minutes is hardly enough time to highlight the many missed opportunities to correct past mistakes and manage spending responsibly. Yet here we are again discussing another potential increase in the real estate tax rate, currently at \$1.125 per hundred.

[00:05:12] A look at my Fairfax County tax bills show a troubling trend. In 2009, the rate was 104. Since then, we've seen fluctuations, often conveniently around election years.

[00:05:27] For example, election year 2011 saw a decrease. 2019 remained unchanged. 2023 saw a slight decrease of 1.5%. January 1, 2024, followed by a tax rate increase of .03 per \$100, coincided with two

consecutive \$300 million projected shortfalls for FY25 and FY26.

[00:05:59] What is even more concerning is the actual total tax rate pay. While the advertised rate is 1.125, the real tax burden, after adding various fees, rain and insect infestation, is actually 1.1585 per hundred.

[00:06:21] That's 3.35 cents higher than the \$100 mentioned. The rain tax, a hidden cost to homeowners. The fee introduced in 2010 was meant to address stormwater runoff problems created by the county's own approval of unchecked development.

[00:06:39] It turned into yet another permanent revenue stream burdening all homeowners, high-density development. Fairfax County pushes for high-density development, not only increases tax revenue, but also drives up property assessments, further inflating tax bills.

[00:06:56] Yet, despite these massive revenue growth, we still face budget deficits and threats of service cuts, especially the fire and emergency response, which are more critical than ever due to this high-density growth.

[00:07:12] Instead of constant tax increases and spending beyond our means, I urge this board to consider greater transparency in the total tax burden, including fees like the rain tax, a fairer system for builders, not residents, pay for stormwater mitigation, responsible budgeting that reflects revenue realities rather than unchecked spending.

[00:07:39] Lastly, I find it troubling that while tax burdens grow, Fairfax County continues pushing bond referendums, more debt that ultimately leads to higher taxes. Recently, a five-year schedule for \$1.2 billion in bonds was released.

[00:07:59] The cycle of assessments increases, tax rates, and unchecked spending must stop. It's time for real tax relief for the citizens. Thank you very much. Speaker number two is Peggy Cook, to be followed by Corazon Sandoval Foley and Stacy Kincaid, if I called your name.

[00:08:17] There's a lot of seats right down here in the front. If you can make your way down so that you're ready to testify, that would be appreciated. Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Peggy Cook, but I would like to yield my time to Kimberly Fergus. Hello.

[00:08:33] Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Kimberly Fergus. I have come here today to ask you, the Board of Supervisors, to restore funding for the Community Service Board Program, New Generations. New Generations provides residential treatment to women and their children who are impacted by substance abuse.

[00:08:58] For over 30 years, pregnant women and women with small children have entered the program and have received the specialized services they need to beat their addiction and become the women and mother their children deserve. Because of new generations, women do not have to choose between staying with their children and getting help for what they need.

[00:09:18] Please do not be the board who eliminates this changing service. The board who no longer sees the value in investing in mothers so they can address their addiction and become better mothers. Mothers who are involved and eliminate the need for expensive foster care. care that is expensive financially as well as emotionally and developmentally for the children who are removed from their parents.

[00:09:42] I would not be standing here today in front of you if it were not for this program. New Generations gave me another opportunity at life, another opportunity to be a mother, another opportunity

to be an amazing woman, who I am today.

[00:10:02] When I walked into New Generations, my son was four months old. He was diagnosed with failure to thrive, and in my eyes, I failed as a mother. I did not think I was a worthy woman, a worthy mother, a worthy sister, or a community member.

[00:10:21] New Generations has taught me to forgive myself, to heal from my trauma, to live a fulfilling life in recovery, and most importantly, helped me to develop the most remarkable relationship with my son, who is now 12 years old and thriving. I know my worth because of New Generations.

[00:10:38] I am an employed woman, a responsible, law-abiding, tax-paying member of the community. I am this woman because of New Generations. I understand that the backup plan, if New Generations is eliminated, is to serve the women and children in the Crossroads program. This will not provide what women and children need.

[00:10:55] Crossroads is a large, mixed-gender program. I needed the trauma-informed care that is part of New Generations. I needed my son, a small-like home environment, not an institution. Closing New Generations will have a negative impact on the community.

[00:11:12] I do not want a woman to have to go back to Sophie's Choice. life-saving treatment, or giving up your child. I assume that you are aware that the Crossroads building in the community's largest program to provide substance abuse treatment has been closed since January of 2025 due to maintenance issues.

[00:11:28] Even there, though, as a reduced program operating in borrowed space, my understanding is the program is not expected to be back at capacity in its building for several years. Reducing Crossroads, Eliminating New Generations, and Eliminating Cornerstones, which is another CSB residential substance abuse program, also set up to be cut through the budget, all at the same time is too much to balance on one of the county's most valuable population.

[00:11:55] It is unfair and potentially dangerous to our community and its citizens to have all these cuts done once for this population. Our community is still faced with an opioid crisis. Adults, those from good families who are rich, and those who are poor are still impacted every day by the opioid crisis.

[00:12:12] Thank you. Thank you, Kimberly. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you. I do not stand alone. Thank you. And if you wouldn't mind, if you could just sign in with the clerk over here just so that we can remember your testimony, that would be appreciated. Absolutely. Thank you very much. Thank you. Our next speaker is Corazon Sandoval Foley, to be followed by Sheriff Stacy Kincaid, Desiree Pitts, and Sarah Bunicelli.

[00:12:37] If I called your name, please be ready to testify. Welcome. My name is Corazon Sandoval Foley, 45-year resident of Springfield District, and with four generations of our family having contributed to our beloved Burke, Virginia hometown.

[00:12:55] We are Burkeites. I want to present my independent analysis of the budget in contrast to the harsh perspective by Pat Herity. Pat suggested a deep dive into the budget by citizens, and as a resident with an MBA in finance, I volunteered to join such a budget exercise, but Pat has not responded, perhaps because I am an independent and he really only wants Republicans.

[00:13:23] Of course, I have criticized Pat's \$9 million hill-cutting boondoggle, so it may be Pat's wasteful spending as well. Our Sandoval family, a Sandoval Foley family, strongly supports the aging in place

movement and the need to lower real estate taxes, partly through diversification of our county tax revenues.

[00:13:51] I support the meals tax diversification to lower real estate taxes. I support the 10% budget reduction exercise by our excellent county executive, Ryan Hill. But I did notice that you guys, the Board of Supervisors, did not participate in this critical exercise.

[00:14:14] So the FY2026 general fund expenditures showed the Board of Supervisors getting a 3.5% increase. If you were to follow the county executive office that reported a 12% cut, the budget could be reduced by over a million dollars.

[00:14:36] And this analysis does not claw back the large pay raise that you guys passed in 2023. I should note that Pat told me during the 2023 election year that, like my position, he too would donate to the community the pay raise against which he voted.

[00:15:00] I have asked if he could donate to the Foley Community Center project, known as the Center Without Walls that will be moving to the Huntsman Square, a public-private partnership that he could support. I await his generosity, particularly since he's now a senior and has been a senior for several years.

[00:15:22] Finally, I asked the board to respond to our petition for fair treatment. Followed president and recognized center co-founders, as with the Mott and Pint Center. My league husband, Michael, Darian Foley, and I, founded in 2007, the Center Without Walls, worked for 20 years with churches, nonprofits, and the county to develop the center.

[00:15:46] This year, we will move to the lease at Huntsman Square as a center with walls. The current name is a misnomer since the center will support youth and senior programming, as I had suggested. I followed the board requirements for public campaign for the petition.

[00:16:05] It is now up to the board to proceed with the required online voting, particularly in honor of my husband, who died at age 75 on April 12, 2022, after years of suffering illnesses related to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam.

[00:16:26] Mike was a Vietnam veteran, son of the American Revolution, distinguished diplomat and CIA manager. The center co-founders asked for fair treatment, and that you named the Foley Community Center at Burke Springfield.

[00:16:43] Let me conclude by thanking Evan Braff and Chris Leonard, the best staff of Fairfax County, Virginia. Thank you. Thank you very much, Corazon. And our next speaker is Sheriff Stacy Kincaid. Welcome, Sheriff Kincaid.

[00:17:01] Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the board. On behalf of the men and women of the Sheriff's Office, I appreciate the opportunity to provide input for the FY2025 budget. As in previous years, I am compelled to share that inequities with our compensation continue to result in a high vacancy rate, employee fatigue, health and wellness struggles, and a consistent decrease in employee morale.

[00:17:27] Despite these difficulties, the men and women of the Sheriff's Office continue to perform vital services that contribute to the safety and well-being of the residents of Fairfax County. During this fiscal year, my confinement deputies processed over 15,000 inmates, all while ensuring they receive rehabilitation through our nationally recognized paradigm-shifting programs, which include our

Medication for Opioid Use Disorder program, our Striving to Achieve Recovery program, and our In-to-Work program, which provides opportunities for inmates to become certified in the food service industry.

[00:18:03] In turn, this certification provides them with a pathway to sustainable employment, which we all know is vital to reducing recidivism. Our civil enforcement branch, which is comprised of only 22 sworn personnel, conducted over 83,000 civil process transactions throughout the 406 square miles of Fairfax County.

[00:18:26] These services include evictions, levies, warrants, and protective orders. The service of these documents often places my deputies in extremely high risk situations, especially when they are confronted with residents who are at their worst every day, as well as those that are being evicted from their homes.

[00:18:43] Court security deputies escorted over 35,000 inmates to and from court. They screened over 476,000 visitors to the courthouse while ensuring the safety and security of 35 sitting judges, witnesses, victims, and parties in each of the 250,000 cases heard within the courthouse.

[00:19:02] Unfortunately, our vacancies remain at 26%, and squads in the adult detention center remain below minimum staffing. Meanwhile, the disparity in our compensation continues to be the number one factor in terms of our hiring. Simply put, our pay is not competitive with other agencies, both in and out of the county.

[00:19:21] As you know, this has led to extended and extensive use of mandatory overtime in order to fill staffing gaps. Since last year, my confinement deputies have worked over 71,000 hours of mandatory overtime and are on pace to work over 90,000 hours of mandatory overtime this year.

[00:19:41] Because of mandatory overtime, our projected overtime costs for this year will exceed \$14 million. This is almost \$6 million more than I said last year. Without mandatory overtime, we would be forced to lock down operations within the ADC.

[00:19:56] This would cause a chain reaction that would ultimately impact the criminal justice system in Fairfax County. This issue is no different than in years prior, when we faced similar pay disparity and vacancy challenges. Consequently, the board unanimously approved a pay equivalency proposal.

[00:20:14] Our attrition and application rates normalized, and the vacancy rate dissipated. Pay matters in every area that impacts vacancy rates, most importantly, recruiting and retention. I look forward to working with all of you to find a way to increase pay for sworn deputies which would accomplish multiple goals.

[00:20:33] It would boost morale and improve the quality of life for current staff who work day in and day out to ensure the mission of my agency is carried out despite the challenges they face. It would greatly aid recruiting efforts by making the sheriff's office more competitive with other law enforcement agencies.

[00:20:50] I do know there is still the ability and path to achieve appropriate compensation for my deputies if we work together and start this conversation today. We appreciate the difficult task ahead and are ready to work with you to find a solution together. We are your sheriff's office, and again, the best sheriff's office in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

[00:21:11] Thank you for your time. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Sheriff Kincaid, and to all your deputies and those who are here today, we appreciate you. Thank you for your testimony. Our next

speaker is Desiree Pitts, but I know she has yielded her time to Steve Monahan from PBA, and I'm going to ask that his time, the time for this slot go from three to five minutes.

[00:21:39] Welcome. Thank you, Chairman. First, I'd like to thank Desiree for yielding her time to me today. Chairman, members of the board, good afternoon. I want to start with saying thank you for your remarks in the beginning of today. It truly means a lot. As many of you know, as you all know, my name is Steve Monahan.

[00:21:57] I'm president of the Fairfax County chapter of the Southern States Police Benevolent Association. I was scheduled to speak with you yesterday, but had to leave unexpectedly due to an incident where two of our officers were shot. I'm grateful to the clerk for distributing copies of my prepared remarks, and I trust that you've read them.

[00:22:15] So I won't repeat everything today, but I do want to emphasize a few key points as well of addressing a few other topics. Today, I speak to you about the importance of fully funding our public safety departments in Fairfax County. Yesterday, officers from our Fair Oaks District conducted what many might consider a routine traffic stop.

[00:22:35] But as we all know, no traffic stop is truly routine. During the encounter, the driver became increasingly confrontational. As officers attempted to de-escalate the situation, the driver drew a firearm and opened fire, striking two of our officers.

[00:22:55] This is a stark reminder of the dangers our officers face every single day. It is also the third time in just eight months that someone has attempted to kill a Fairfax County police officer. These attacks must stop. Our community has been shaken, and while I'm grateful that the officers involved are now recovering, let this serve as a sober reminder.

[00:23:20] Those who protect and serve face real and constant threats. Their bravery deserves more than just gratitude. It demands action and support. I understand the county is facing a deficit. However, I urge you to reconsider some of the proposed budget cuts, particularly the reduction to the police department's overtime budget.

[00:23:41] As I outlined in the speech I provided yesterday, cutting overtime just doesn't impact dollars and cents. It directly affects the boots on the ground. Fewer overtime hours mean fewer officers on the street. We also need to seriously address the critical staffing crisis within the sheriff's office.

[00:24:00] Their members are members, too. Currently, their vacancy rate stands at 26%, and they're losing experienced deputies to better-paying agencies nearby, including the police department. As a result, mandatory overtime has become the norm.

[00:24:17] It's taking a toll. Deputies are burned out, their physical and mental health is at risk, and their personal lives are suffering. This isn't just an internal issue. It's a county-wide safety concern. At the adult detention center at the courthouse, the staffing shortages put everyone at risk.

[00:24:39] Courtrooms are being consolidated due to lack of deputies, which disrupts the judicial process and keeps police officers tied up in court instead of out in the community. Inside the ADC, deputies are managing increased workloads and supervising more inmates with fewer personnel.

[00:24:57] This slows down the booking procedures, keeping officers off the streets even longer. Improving pay for our deputies is not just the right thing to do, it may actually reduce costs by cutting

down on overtime. Competitive compensation will help us retain talent, improve morale, and strengthen public safety across Fairfax County.

[00:25:20] Thank you for your time and your continued commitment to the safety and well-being of our community. Thank you very much, Steve. Appreciate your testimony, especially after a hard day yesterday, so thank you. Speaker number six is Sarah Bonicelli, to be followed by Rose Risley and Evan Jones.

[00:25:42] If I called your name, please come on down to the front so that when it's your time to testify, you are ready. We are on speaker number six. Welcome. Hello. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Sarah Bonicelli, and I'm a current resident of the Braddock District.

[00:25:58] Thank you to Supervisor Walkinshaw for making the time to meet with me prior to today's hearing. I'm here to share my personal testimony in support of the Treasured Employee Child Care Center at the Panino Building. I started my career with Fairfax County as a part-time employee for NCS back in 2004, and I just recently celebrated 11 years as a full-time employee with the CSB.

[00:26:21] I stand here today wearing three hats. First, as a working mother of two young children currently enrolled at the ECCC. Second, as an employee who has spent 21 years serving the residents of Fairfax County. And lastly, and most importantly, as an ally and an advocate for the 40 staff members that could be deeply impacted by the projected budget cuts to privatize their center.

[00:26:46] I would like to use my time today to publicly acknowledge what I think makes the ECCC so special, and that is the staff. I want all of you to know just how deeply I admire the work that they do, because no matter the outcome of the budget, I believe that they deserve to be recognized.

[00:27:03] The staff at ECCC are simply remarkable. This is a program that has been fine-tuned over decades of dedicated service, and one might even call it an oasis. What is most remarkable to me is that in spite of the potential changes that staff are facing, changes that would significantly impact their work, their families, and their livelihood, they continue to maintain hope and a positive attitude.

[00:27:29] They greet us every day with a smile. They're dusting themselves off, showing up to work to take care of our kids just as well, if not better, than they ever have. It is both admirable and inspiring. These are people that have dedicated their lives to caring for our children, not just our children, but all children.

[00:27:50] They've chosen to pursue higher education, committing their minds and honing their skills to give young children the very best that they can give. They are laying the foundation for the next generation. The work that they do is so vital to our community and society as a whole, and it pains me to think where we would be without them.

[00:28:10] I'm proud that my children are able to attend the ECCC, and I'm proud to call the ECCC staff my colleagues. As county employees, the work that we do may be very different, but the humanity that we share is the same. They don't just take care of our children, but in turn, they're taking care of us too.

[00:28:32] The teachers are kind and humble leaders, and they are making the world a better place, and I respect them immensely. They inspire me to be a better parent, a better employee, and a better person. I'm sure you've all heard the saying it takes a village. Well, simply put, the ECCC is my village. I'm grateful for it, I cherish it, and I'd be truly devastated if I lost it. Please consider the profound impact this could

have on your employees and preserve the ECCC as a county-operated program. Thank you for this opportunity to speak today.

[00:29:02] Thank you. Our next speaker is Rose Risley, to be followed by Evan Jones, Daria Akers, and Kelly McHugh. If I called your name, please come on down. Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[00:29:20] My name is Rose Mario Risley, and I'm the chair of the Fairfax Area Coordinating Council for Aging and Adults with Disabilities, also known as the CCAAD. I am here this afternoon representing the council's 38 members and the budget positions they adopted.

[00:29:37] The council thanks the county executive for including funding for older adults and adults with disabilities in the advertised budget. For the fiscal year 2026 budget, the CCAAD asks the board to support the proposed additional quarter penny funding for affordable housing, support the proposed funding for the Kingstown Center for Active Adults, support the proposed funding for the support coordination to accommodate new Medicaid waivers coming from the state, support the proposed funding increase for the health and human services contracts,

[00:30:14] Support the proposed funding increase for Pathway Homes Community Support Specialists. Oppose the proposed reduction of supportive and inclusion services provided at the senior centers. The 50% reduction would cause an unnecessary burden on the current continuum of care, reducing the quality of care, leading to more social isolation.

[00:30:38] It is an added cost burden to the social safety net, and in some instances, redirecting the cost to the seniors. This would lead to putting more seniors into a more restrictive environment sooner or further isolation.

[00:30:56] Oppose the proposed reduction of funding for the Self-Directed Services Program. The post-secondary funding option in the Self-Directed Services has allowed and encouraged graduates with developmental disabilities to attend colleges and related programs.

[00:31:11] By removing this program, we take away that springboard into an independent adulthood and instead fund only less forward-thinking SDS options or force people into more expensive day and employment services. Oppose the proposed elimination of three FTE positions providing transition services to FCPS seniors.

[00:31:34] These transition staff are critical for helping students and their families make the leap from school services to the adult service world, which is complicated and wildly different. These transition services staff are essential to ensure students and families don't leave the school system in crisis and instead launch into post-school life safely and successfully.

[00:31:59] Oppose the proposed elimination of respite services for individuals with developmental disabilities. This respite program is one of the only options for families needing either a planned or unplanned break in caregiving. By removing the county funding here, it will be fiscally out of reach for many of the families on the waiver waiting list who have no other options and whose number one need for help is respite care.

[00:32:25] Oppose the proposed elimination of flyers and mail inserts in tax mailings. This will further increase the digital divide. A mixed-media approach is needed to reach all residents. These suggestions are

aligned with One Fairfax and the intention to include all Fairfaxians, especially those that are most vulnerable or historically disenfranchised.

[00:32:49] We would support retaining funding for these programs through the meals tax outlined in the county executive's proposed budget. We would further suggest earmarking any funds generated from a meals tax for human services needs. We know this is an area where Fairfax may be called to step up to support the most vulnerable members of our community, given the federal landscape.

[00:33:13] The CCAAD is available as a resource to the board. We invite you to reach out to us at ccaad at fairfaxcounty.gov or by calling 703-246-8788. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[00:33:29] Speaker number eight is Evan Jones. Evan Jones here. Evan Jones to be followed by Daria Akers, Kelly McHugh, and Travis Chatfield. Welcome. Good afternoon. I'm Evan Jones, Secretary for the Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board.

[00:33:48] On behalf of our board, I want to begin by expressing our deep gratitude for the significant local support you provide to the CSB year after year at an unprecedented level in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

[00:34:04] Thanks to your partnership, we continue to serve over 22,500 residents of Fairfax County and the cities of Fairfax and Falls Church, with essential services in mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities.

[00:34:25] The CSB board acknowledges this is a particularly challenging budget year. The proposed \$9 million reduction to the CSB for fiscal 2026 spans multiple critical service areas, including residential treatment and transition and employment and day services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

[00:34:52] These cuts will impact programs that support our most vulnerable community members. I want to highlight two of the proposed reductions. The first is the closing of two residential treatment programs, A New Generation and Cornerstones, representing a \$4.6 million reduction.

[00:35:15] These programs are supervised 24 hours a day and provide critical treatment services to women with substance use issues who have children and then adults with co-occurring severe and persistent mental health and substance use issues.

[00:35:33] The individuals served in these programs require complex discharge planning. The CSP requests maximum flexibility to allow for appropriate discharge planning to occur if the decision is made to close these programs.

[00:35:50] The CSP Fiscal Committee has been monitoring spending trends at the agency, and we feel there is adequate financial flexibility to keep these programs open open for the first quarter of fiscal 26, if that additional time is needed.

[00:36:11] The second reduction I would like to highlight is the loss of transition support for students graduating from Fairfax County Public Schools. The CSB transition staff play a pivotal role in helping young adults move into adulthood with the right services in place.

[00:36:33] CSB staff have already met with Fairfax County Public Schools staff to help educate them on the new role they will need to play due to this reduction. The CSB staff who provide this service are content

experts, and the smooth transition from Fairfax County Public Schools to the Community Services Board will suffer as a result of this reduction.

[00:36:58] I must urgently communicate that over fiscal 25 and 26 budgets, the CSB has taken the largest reduction of any county agency. This has placed a tremendous strain on our ability to serve some of Fairfax's most vulnerable individuals and provide legally mandated services.

[00:37:22] These reductions will continue to erode services at a time that stress and mental health issues continue to escalate across the county and our nation. They place the CSB at risk of not being able to maintain the required services outlined in the Commonwealth's settlement agreement with the Department of Justice for Developmental Disability Services.

[00:37:49] It also further burdens the CSB when we are in the middle of a psychiatric hospital bed crisis, implementing the largest number of DD waivers ever issued to the CSB and managing a health care workforce shortage.

[00:38:06] Individuals will wait longer for services, and the quality of those services will be reduced because of these proposed reductions. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Daria Akers, to be followed by Kelly McHugh and Travis Chatfield.

[00:38:30] Good afternoon. My name is Daria Akers. I'm an at-large representative of the Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board.

[00:38:46] I am also a parent who has struggled to navigate the services system for individuals with developmental disabilities. I want to first thank you for the support you continue to give our community. Thanks to your partnership, thousands of families just like mine have seen integral progress in services for our most vulnerable residents.

[00:39:13] We deeply value the county's commitment. The proposed budget includes reductions to the CSP employment and day services for individuals with developmental disabilities. For several years, CSB staff and our community providers have identified and implemented efficiencies that allowed us to meet growing needs without coming back to the Board of Supervisors for additional support.

[00:39:45] However, those efficiencies are now fully exhausted. Any future reduction will have a direct impact on services provided through employment and day services. Today, CSB Employment and Day Services supports more than 1,500 individuals as they build skills, engage in meaningful activities, and pursue employment opportunities that connect them to the broader community.

[00:40:15] You may also recall that during this most recent legislation session, the CSB and the CSB Board brought forth the significant shortfall in support coordinator funding.

[00:40:32] Currently, the state budget includes \$8.7 million in one-time funding for support coordinators. We hope that the state succeeds with the goal of eliminating the Developmental Disability Priority 1 waitlist.

[00:40:48] However, if this goal is successful, the CSB will need an additional 72 new support coordinators and business staff. This will create an annual funding shortfall of \$14.5 million because Medicaid reimbursement rates do not pay for the cost of care.

[00:41:15] As you can see, this amount is significantly larger than the one-time funding in the existing budget. The CSB board partners closely with CSB staff, and we strongly feel the agency is at a critical

crossroads where additional reductions may potentially lead to unwanted systemic failures in service delivery. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 10 is Kelly McHugh. Is Kelly McHugh here to be followed by Travis Chatfield, Laura Eakin-Urlacher, and Anita Herrera. If I called

[00:41:51] your name, please come on down closer. Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Kelly McHugh, and I want to thank the chairman and the board for this opportunity. I'm speaking today in support of the Fairfax County Employees Child Care Center. My two children, Bryn and Wyatt, currently attend the center. We are residents of the Braddock District, and I was born and raised in the Mason District, and my family still resides there. I've been an employee with Fairfax County for just about 12 years now. I work as a supervisor with the Child Care Assistance and Referral Program, which provides subsidized child care to eligible families in Fairfax County.

[00:42:26] I oversee a team that provides case management to around 1,000 Fairfax County residents and their families. I'm also the training manager, so I develop and revise training guides and manuals to ensure program compliance with state regulations. I will say, as you've heard from many other parents, we have jobs where other county staff and residents depend on us for services and guidance.

[00:42:48] Personally, I love my job. We assist families in working towards self-sufficiency while supporting quality child care. I have incredible supervisors and program leadership, and I strive to embody those same values and leadership style with my own team and the families that we serve. It was a challenge for us to determine whether it was worth it to our family financially for me to go back to work after having our second child.

[00:43:10] As we all know, child care is very expensive, and with our work schedules, we would need our children to be in care five days a week full time. I can say that it is truly because of ECCC that I chose to continue my career path with Fairfax County. Having my children at the ECCC allows me to know they're in a high-quality, early childhood program, and at the same time, I get the balance that I need as a working parent.

[00:43:34] ECCC has always supported me visiting my children during my lunch break so that I can have that additional time with them. They provide monthly family engagement activities, and my supervisor always encourages me to attend any field trip or event. As I continue to grow my career here, I will never forget the support that the county provided to my family during these critical years.

[00:43:54] Now, ECCC is extraordinary for numerous reasons. They are NACI accredited and receive the highest possible rating while participating in the Virginia Quality Program. Only a handful of child care providers in Fairfax County receive this rating. They use a research-based curriculum where children learn through play, and the educators adjust to the needs of each individual child.

[00:44:11] In addition to this, 80% of the educators have degrees, and some of them have been with ECCC for 20 plus years, which is unheard of. On a personal note, they have a heck of a lot of patience. Now, since the announcement of the budget cuts, we have had overwhelming support from parents, alumni, and staff. We started weekly meetings and even developed a budget committee to review revenue and costs incurred by ECCC. The package provided to you is feedback from parents, staff, and others on how we can reduce the cost to the county. We can save ECCC if you give us a chance, a chance to sit at the table and work to expand the best child care model

[00:44:50] in the state. But we need your help in changing the policy. You can see that we can make shirts and our children can make signs, but only you can give us the opportunity to expand this change and expand this incredible service to FCPS employees and or the community. Every family deserves quality child care. Please don't take that from your employees. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 11, Travis Chatfield. Is speaker number 11 Travis Chatfield here? Okay. To be followed by Laura Eakin Erlacher and Anita Herrera. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the board. My name is

[00:45:27] Travis Chatfield and I'm here tonight to speak in support of two programs which have been recommended to be eliminated in the advertised budget for fiscal year 26. These two programs, the first is Student Tools for Emergency Preparedness program run by the Department of Emergency Management as well as the Community Emergency Response Team, CERT, run by the Fire and Rescue Department, are both critical to the county and cost basically nothing to fund.

[00:45:54] The total commitment by the county for both programs combined is less than \$50,000 a year, yet they provide crucial support through a network of thousands of volunteers to the county in times of uncertainty and crisis. After Action Review of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for these exact types of programs and even recommended expanding them to give our community a better chance of success in a future disaster.

[00:46:18] Yet now, here we are, discussing the dismantling of these programs instead, which is irresponsible and incredibly short-sighted. Our immediate area is facing two concurrent public health emergencies as we speak. The measles outbreak has already made its way to our doorstep, and the bird flu contagion has wreaked havoc on our economic impacts all over the country.

[00:46:39] The worst of it is arguably to come shortly, not to mention other hazards. we're in the flight path at two extremely busy airports, one of which has already had a mass casualty event this year. While these programs are not meant to supplant first responders, they do provide disaster risk reduction education to members of the community who would otherwise not have that information. Participants and volunteers in these programs overwhelmingly become vectors of this information to their close family, friends, neighbors, relatives within the community, thereby strengthening our resilience and increasing our capacity to better understand the all-hazards landscape, and what to do in the event of a disaster situation.

[00:47:18] The proposed budget as presented will increase emergency response times, decrease available personnel and resources, and reduce training opportunities for our remaining first responders. As FEMA and other federal departments now exist in name only, when crises come to the county, we are effectively on our own.

[00:47:37] The cavalry is not coming over the nearest hill to help. Just last week, the Trump administration denied Arkansas's application for individual and public assistance money. If this happened in a deeply conservative part of the country like Arkansas, and then this week Kentucky as well, we can expect no help here either.

[00:47:56] This callous and indifferent approach will negatively affect the region for years to come as disasters pile up and relief is not provided by the federal government, as it has in the past. The departmental cuts put forward are too extensive as proposed, and keeping these programs, though they are small, can help substantially offset the impacts of these disasters, ones that we will experience in the coming years.

[00:48:22] We should not be so eager to throw out the hard-learned knowledge from the COVID pandemic just because we currently have a budget shortfall. Every dollar spent on mitigation and education gets us anywhere between \$4 and \$13 in the time of crisis back.

[00:48:38] It's an investment worth making. Thank you so much. Thank you very much. Speaker number 12 is Laura Eakin-Urlacher. Are you here? Yes. To be followed by Anita Herrera and David Wagner. There's plenty of seats down here in the front.

[00:48:56] If I called your name, please come on down. Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay, Vice Chair, Smith, and District Supervisors. My name is Laura Aiken Urlacher, Chair of the Voluntary Fairfax County Park Foundation Board of Directors.

[00:49:12] As articulated in the Foundation's letter sent to each of you and copied to the Fairfax County Park Authority Board of Directors earlier this month, Vice Chair Anita Herrera and I are here to reiterate the Foundation Board's concerns with the Park Authority's proposal to have the Foundation raise an additional \$300,000 to cover the salaries of its three staff.

[00:49:37] Anita will articulate in greater detail what this could mean for the viability of the Park Foundation, its ability to operate as a going concern, and the possibility of its dissolution. I won't spend my allotted time on all the valuable support the Foundation has provided the Park Authority over the years in raising additional funds, particularly the past few years.

[00:50:00] We experience them in the neighborhoods and the communities where we live and work. Today, we're delighted to provide our 2024 annual report with these details. As a collaborative partner of the Park Authority with the mission to supplement the Park Authority's projects, I'd like us to consider how we can get through this tough economic time so the Foundation can continue its great work under the leadership of the Foundation's Executive Director, Bobby Longworth, Development Director, Margaret Thaxton, together with a recently hired Finance Director.

[00:50:37] The foundation, working with the Park Authority Board and the Board of Supervisors to come up with a solution. I don't have specifics today, but with more time talking with each other, we'll come up with some ideas to meet these times.

[00:50:54] It's been done before. Here's an example from Park Authority history. Back in 1950, my great-grandfather, Leroy Aiken, a real estate developer from Manhattan, Kansas, who had purchased land south of Route 50 and west of the Future Beltway, wanted to give 14 acres to Fairfax County for a park.

[00:51:14] However, there was no agency to accept such donation. The county quickly established a park authority to accept the gift. He continued to give additional acres and money to establish Aiken Park, and the 225-acre Park opened in 1968. I'm proud of his entrepreneurial vision and generosity that led to the park system we know today. Another thoughtful solution to help our county's parks came in 2001 with the Park Authority's establishment of the Fairfax County Park Foundation to raise supplemental

[00:51:50] funds to support the county's parks. I was fortunate to have been on that first board. Our first major project was Clemmie Jantree, the generous donation of the Leibowitz family of two acres in McLean for a playground where children of all abilities play together.

[00:52:06] For the past 25 years, the Park Foundation has succeeded in bringing in voluntary gifts to support the Park Authority. Donors appreciate that 100% of their donations will be transferred in full to

help the favorite park program event, such as the Summer Entertainment Series, Earth Day This Saturday, Wonder Wagon, and much more.

[00:52:28] A personal and recent example is an Aiken family donation of \$280,000 for Aiken Park improvements at the Prosperity Avenue entrance, including the parking area, a new pavilion, and benches, with the knowledge that 100% of this donation would go to park infrastructure improvements.

[00:52:46] We welcome an opportunity to find a solution that allows us to raise unrestricted funds to maintain the foundation as a going concern if the foundation must cover staff salaries. But we must do so while acknowledging in the recent best of times our unrestricted donations are approximately 7% of the total donations.

[00:53:10] I'll end my remarks with a quote from my great-grandfather at 95 years old. It is from a November 9, 1970, Washington Post article profiling his contributions to the county park system. In it, he acknowledges tough economic times ahead.

[00:53:27] Quote, unquote, money is going to be harder to get. With continued collaboration, we'll get through this difficult economic time 55 years later. And as a result, our parks, programs, and events will continue to be one of the greatest community assets.

[00:53:44] Thank you. And if I have some time, may I yield it to Anita? I can't do that, but I appreciate your ask, and Anita is signed up next. Okay, thank you very much. Thank you very much. We are on speaker number 13, Anita Herrera.

[00:54:02] Welcome. Thank you. I'll speak really fast because I need a lot to get through. I'm Anita Herrera, vice chair of the Park Foundation, and I thank you for this opportunity to address you today. You have a proposal before you whereby the Park Authority wants to cover its budget shortfall this year by charging the foundation \$300,000 for salaries of three Fairfax County employees that assist the foundation with its fundraising efforts.

[00:54:28] Such a charge would quadruple the foundation's overhead expenses and enforce its dissolution within the year. The Park Authority created the foundation as a 501c3 organization to exclusively support it by raising funds for specific programs the Park Authority names each year.

[00:54:48] As the entity exclusively supporting the Park Authority, the Park Authority restricts and controls the foundation's ability to operate and raise funds. To date, the Park Authority has been paying for the salaries of three Fairfax County employees assigned to the foundation.

[00:55:04] This relationship is not unlike other supported entities like the National Park Service, which in 2023 provided grants in the amount of \$20 million to the National Park Foundation to cover its administrative expenses. Now, why was the foundation created if tax-deductible contributions can be paid directly to the park authority?

[00:55:29] The reason is because, in accordance with Internal Revenue Code 170C1, such donations must be made exclusively for the public benefit purpose and cannot inure to any individual. To protect themselves from perceived quid pro quos, the Foundation's corporate donors have policies requiring that charitable donations be handled through 501C3s and clearly designate the purpose is for a specific public benefit.

[00:55:58] The donors will not donate unrestricted funds that could be used to pay for county overhead, potentially availed quid pro quo. Corporate donors are accountable to regulators and stakeholders, so they donate through a 501c3, which provides comfort to all that the donation restrictions will be enforced, because the foundation is an independent entity that must enforce all donor restrictions.

[00:56:23] Failure to do so would be illegal as a violation of the Internal Revenue Code and subject the foundation to penalties, loss of tax exempt status, and lawsuits against the foundation's board members.

[00:56:40] Unlike unrestricted funds, raising designated funds is easy because we have a great product. One of you told me that it was easy to raise over \$200,000 for your campaign. That's because your donors want you. The foundation raised over \$2 million this past fiscal year.

[00:56:59] But raising funds for overhead is different. The foundation raises unrestricted funds to cover \$100,000 of administrative expenses with two annual fundraising appeals. Let me get to my request. To avoid the foundation's dissolution within the year, we respectfully make two requests.

[00:57:17] First, to avoid dissolution, we request that any additional charge imposed on the foundation be extended for payment so that it cannot come due before July 1, 2026. This will forestall default within the year and prevent dissolution within the year.

[00:57:35] We need time to get creative, which leads to my second request. We respectfully request that the Board of Supervisors direct the park authority to permit the foundation without restrictions to investigate and pursue the potential to support other governmental or other entities engaged in the public benefit consistent with the mission of promoting parks, the environment, sports, and recreation.

[00:58:04] Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is speaker number 14, David Bogner, to be followed by Tati Carnes, Jim Waller. If I called your name, please come on down. Welcome. Good afternoon.

[00:58:24] I'm speaking to you today as a parent of a child at the Fairfax County Employees Child Care Center, urging you to reject the proposal to transition the ECCC to a private provider. You've heard many stories of the positive impact of the center on the children and staff involved with the program, And my son, Oliver, has greatly benefited as well.

[00:58:45] But instead, I'm going to discuss recruitment, retention, and strategic planning. The ECCC is not well known as far as benefits offered to county employees, possibly because it isn't a free benefit. Parents still have to pay tuition for their child to attend.

[00:59:02] But as a non-profit, county-administered program, the center can focus on quality of care and education. The center was one of the main reasons why my wife and I came to Fairfax County for work, and I'm sure we aren't alone. It should be better advertised to prospective employees and used as a recruitment tool. The ECCC also helps with employee retention. A county employee whose child starts as an infant with the center will work for the county for at least five years by the time the child graduates. In response to a question on the fiscal year 26 budget, staff stated that, quote, 0.7 percent of the workforce is able to utilize the ECCC.

[00:59:40] They got this number by dividing the 100 full-time equivalent child care slots by the County's 13,500 merit employees. A more realistic number would calculate the percentage of county employees who could utilize the Senate. Based on the Fairfax County Demographics Report 2024, around 7% of adults

in Fairfax County have children ages 0 to 5. Applying the same percentage to county employees gives 945 merit positions that have children who could attend the ECCC for a utilization percentage of more than 10%. This number does not factor out those employees for whom having their child attend would not be feasible for various reasons.

[01:00:19] With the center boosting recruitment and retention, it also benefits the county for strategic planning purposes. The 10% utilization doesn't take into account how many employees remain with the county after the child ages out of the center. Over the past 37 years, thousands of children have been cared for and educated by the ECSEC, some of them even becoming county employees themselves.

[01:00:39] By keeping the center as a county-administered program, you keep the exceptional level of quality, you attract talented employees early in their careers, and you can retain them for the entirety of their child's time at the center and beyond, thus improving the continuity of services that the county provides to its residents. This is all in addition to the fact that if you choose to privatize the ECCC, you will be actively hurting working families who support the county and its residents every day with their work. If your goal is to help grow the county and encourage younger people and families to move here, then supporting the ECCC and similar programs is imperative. So I urge you to reject the proposal to transition the Fairfax County Employees Child

[01:01:17] Care Center to a private provider. Through its impacts on recruitment, retention, and strategic planning, it is as much a benefit for county residents as it is for county employees. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 15 is Toddy Carnes to be followed by James Waller. Paul Thomas, welcome.

[01:01:39] Mr. Chairman and Supervisors of the Board, I am Toddy Carnes, the President of the Friends of Historic Huntley. Historic Huntley is a Fairfax County Park Authority property which we support. For several years now, we and other Park Friends groups have appeared before you, testifying to the budgetary shortfalls that the Park Authority has endured for many, many years, going back at least to the Great Recession of 2008. We are grateful that you have heard us and that you have been working to put the Park Authority on a path towards increased general revenue funding and critical assessment of its current funding structure today we

[01:02:19] respectfully request that you stay your course last year you added \$120,000 to the Park Authority's budget for open space mowing this year's advertised budget proposes to take back that addition and more with a \$129,000 cut to open space mowing mowing is important at Historic Huntley where a key feature is its original intact terraced lawn. Please stay your course and prevent the cancellation of your

[01:02:51] recent addition to mowing funds. Last year you added \$890,000 in forestry funding. This year's advertised budget proposes to cut forestry funding by \$200,000 despite the fact that last year's increase fell short of meeting full forestry needs. Historic Huntley has woods on its grounds.

[01:03:13] Please continue your work towards making the park authority's forestry budget whole. Stay your course and restore the forestry funds proposed to be cut. Last year, you directed that alternative sources to the real estate tax be explored.

[01:03:29] Accordingly, a meals tax and an increase in the transit occupancy tax are now on the table. The Friends of Historic Huntley supports these additional slash increased funding streams and encourages you to stay your course in developing revenue alternatives to the real estate tax.

[01:03:48] One source of alternative funding for the Park Authority has been, as you've just heard, the Park Foundation, which last year brought in \$2.4 million in private sector gifts. This year's advertised budget proposes to decrease by \$300,000 the county support of the Park Foundation, making the foundation responsible for raising this portion of its operating expenses.

[01:04:13] It sure seems odd to be taking the hatchet to a moneymaker. Is this an expression of supreme confidence in the foundation's fundraising abilities? Or is this a kick in the pants to do more than collect and channel funds being held out by self-identified donors, such as friends groups?

[01:04:30] We can't say. What we will say is that if the foundation is doing well, continuing its operational support, perhaps even providing more support, can only help the foundation to bring in more private sector funds. If, however, the foundation's productivity does not seem to be in line with the county's residential and commercial affluence, then the \$300,000 should be allocated to study alternative procurement of private sector funds for the Park Authority.

[01:04:57] Indeed, further study of the Park Authority's entire revenue model is needed. Last year in your budget guidance, you said, quote, County staff, in concert with the Park Authority Board, are directed to review the current funding structure of FCPA to determine if there are alternative approaches that could be considered to improve park services, facilities, and maintenance, and further address equity.

[01:05:23] While we are aware of an ongoing equity review, we are unaware of any review of alternative funding approaches designed to improve park services, facilities, and maintenance. Such a review is imperative in the face of the park authority's current fee-based revenue model.

[01:05:41] During these hearings, you have heard from many advocates opposed to privatizing the employee child care center because the focus would shift from providing services to turning a profit. That, in a nutshell, is what has happened to our parks management following adoption of the fee-based revenue model.

[01:06:01] The focus is no longer on stewarding natural and cultural resources, but on using them to generate a buck and neglecting them if they cannot the focus is no longer on serving County residents but on shaking them down for cash please stay your course and ensure a funding structure review to improve park services facilities and maintenance open space mowing forestry new taxes and review of FCPA's funding structure please stay the course you have been

[01:06:35] charting these past three years in support of these interests? Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 16 is James Waller, followed by Bruce. We have Bruce Wright on the phone and then Paul Thomas. Welcome. Okay, good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, supervisors, and county executive. My name is James Waller. I'm president of the Friends of Colvin-Rudd Mill and a member of the Fair Parks Initiative. It's an understatement to say that this is an extraordinary time of uncertainty for the county budget with the federal actions to eliminate grants, reduce jobs, and shut

[01:07:13] down agency affects families and friends and, of course, the county's budget. I wish you well in your deliberations and I want to express my appreciation for measures you've taken already to try to mitigate some of the adverse effects of this development. But amidst the gloom, we must not forget our friends silently waiting to give us a lift.

[01:07:33] I'm talking about the parks. 80% of the county's residents visit the parks in order to recharge both physically and mentally. They do to delight in the beauty and the solitude, to benefit from their

contributions to a healthier, cleaner environment, and to learn about nature and the region's history.

[01:07:53] That's why, together with the Fair Parks Initiative, the Friends of Colvin Run Mill have been advocating for more employees in the parks themselves. The advertised budget gives priorities to employee compensation. This is very commendable. To meet ends meet, however, the county executive has proposed extraordinary reductions in other areas that the county executive said would certainly generate some feedback. Well, I don't want to disappoint him. The proposed reductions in the park authority

[01:08:25] budget are about \$1.5 million, or about 2.5% of the overall cuts. However, the park authority's share of the overall general budget is 0.65%. That means that the share of park cuts is four times its share of the general budget. This is disproportionately high and I think doesn't seem right. Here are some specific suggestions. Roll back the proposed cuts to trail maintenance. Roll back the proposed cuts to athletic court maintenance. And roll back the proposed cuts to forestry service contracts. One of the bright spots of the budget last year was the increase in the funding

[01:09:04] in these particular areas. The cuts to trail and athletic court maintenance would more than wipe out these gains. The proposed cuts make us, who advocate more resources for the park, feel a bit like Sisyphus, rolling that rock up the hill only to have the gods roll it back down again.

[01:09:23] Adding back these three programs that I mentioned would amount to \$700,000 and result in the Park Authority's general budget cuts being 1.3%, still high but more in line with its share of the overall general budget. Now, you might want to ask why the friends of Colvin Run Mill care about forestry, care about athletic courts, and care about trail maintenance. Well, let me explain. Colvin Run is best classified as a resource park with cultural and historical and natural resources. Our 38 acres have an abundance of trees that need tending. Last month, a big

[01:10:01] cedar fell down in the parking lot, and after waiting for a week with no action, I went out my trusty loppers and bow saw and remove the tree. Good deal, you might say. Free service, but I'm not going to be around forever, and getting volunteers is a bit harder these days, and it has been. We care about athletic courts because some years ago, we had a baseball team.

[01:10:24] Yeah, in Great Falls, 1890, a little long ago, but we still care about athletic courts. And finally, with respect to trails, hikers use Holwood Run Mill as a starting point to explore the Cross County Trail and the Rails to River Trail that goes to Fairfax Park. Colvin Run would be an even more convenient place for hikers when the trail is completed that connects this beautiful tunnel under Route 7 is completed and connects to the Rails to River Trail.

[01:10:55] And this would mean that hikers would no longer have to venture out on Colvin Run Road, which has no sidewalks and heavy traffic. We greatly appreciate you, Mr. Chairman, taking an interest. Supervisor Behrman, Supervisor Alcon taking an interest in this, and there has been some progress, some progress, yes, okay, it's only been, anyway.

[01:11:16] But yet, there is no final budget and no timeline for completion. And nearing the anniversary of the building of this tunnel, it still goes to nowhere. Perhaps in this year's budget, provision could be made for the completion of this trail.

[01:11:31] To wrap up, please consider not cutting funding for trail and athletic court maintenance and not cutting forest service contracts. And please, please designate funds so that this beautiful tunnel finally

will go to somewhere.

[01:11:47] Thank you for your kind attention. Thank you very much, James. Speaker number 17 is Bruce Wright, who has joined us by phone. Is Bruce on the line? I am. Can you hear me? We can. Welcome. The floor is yours. Great. Thank you.

[01:12:02] I will add my support for the previous speaker's comments about trail maintenance as I'll be speaking about that. Chairman McKay, Supervisor Alcorn, members of the board, good afternoon. My name is Bruce Wright. I'm a 45-year resident of Reston. First, I want to thank you for recently allocating \$100 million for ped bike projects. Those projects are making a difference, but we need so much more. I have two requests for funding. Both are related to bicycle and pedestrian safety.

[01:12:30] While we have an extensive paved trail system, most of those trails are in bad shape. I've reported several damage trails over the years to VDOT and the county through DPWES. Some have been repaired, but there are insufficient funds for the repair needs. Two examples.

[01:12:46] Utility workers dug up five or six sections of the trail along Sunrise Valley Drive. The utility company repair of those dug-up sections was inadequate. In some sections, too much asphalt had created speed bumps. In other sections, too little asphalt resulted in depressions.

[01:13:03] When DPWES staff visited the site, they determined that the damage was minor and didn't repair it, and those problems have gotten worse. The other example is along West Hawks Road, just west of Fairfax County Parkway. There was extensive damage to most of that trail.

[01:13:19] Staff were responsive, but they determined that only a small section would be repaved, which still hasn't been done. I was told there are limited funds for the needed work. My ask is that you please provide additional funding for repair of county-owned paved trails, including in our parks.

[01:13:36] The situation is so bad that before we spend much more money on new facilities, we should fix those that currently exist. What we need is a program of regular inventory and maintenance of our trails, neither of which is done by VDOT or the county. And I'll be glad to lead a bike tour on some of those trails if you want to see the problems yourself.

[01:13:54] You'll need a really sturdy bike. My second request, on May 10, 2022, you unanimously adopted the recommendations of the Safe Streets for All program. The first recommendation was establishment of the program. The third recommendation was creation of at least one staff position to run the program and monitor performance.

[01:14:14] To my knowledge, no funds have been allocated nor staff assigned to implement the recommendations. Since those recommendations were adopted, 57 pedestrians have died in traffic crashes since 2022, 36% of the 158 total traffic-related deaths in Fairfax County.

[01:14:33] Those deaths are preventable, and implementing the Safe Streets for All recommendations is the best way to prevent them. You know, maybe we should spend 36% of our transportation funding on pedestrian safety until those deaths come down, including funding of this program.

[01:14:49] Thank you for your time and attention. Thank you, Bruce. Speaker number 18 is Paul Thomas, to be followed by Michelle Menapace, Jane Edmondson, and Bill Bowie. Welcome, Paul. Thank you. My name is Paul Thomas. I'm the Fairfax County Human Services Council's Vice Chair and Budget Committee Co-Chair.

[01:15:09] Thank you for your service and for this opportunity to speak with you. I'm here to provide background and amplification to accompany the budget recommendations letter the Human Services Council sent you earlier this week. Earlier this year, the HSC held an in-person summit and conducted an online survey to connect with human services BACs, nonprofits, and other community stakeholders.

[01:15:30] We made sure they were well informed about the budget process and they shared their insights, hopes, and concerns about budget priorities. It's through these efforts that our budget recommendations are informed by the broader human services ecosystem. First, I'll express some support for a few of the items that are funded in the proposed budget.

[01:15:50] The plan to allocate an additional quarter penny to support affordable housing throughout the county will continue the county's progress toward your stated goal of 10,000 new affordable homes by 2034. Support coordination for individuals with developmental disabilities will help individuals and families navigate sometimes Byzantine systems so they can connect to services.

[01:16:14] The HHSBACs have spoken out about the need for this type of support for years. Providing meals for Camp Fairfax is an important statement about the value of equity. Too many of our youth live in homes that lack food security.

[01:16:30] And providing meals for Camp Fairfax supports these students while eliminating stigma that could come with a more targeted program. HHS contract rate and CCFP increases will help address major staffing challenges. I also want to allot the health department's effort to rethink staffing for the health program.

[01:16:49] Making the switch from relying on so many public health nurses to using licensed practical nurses will save a lot of money and, more importantly, will improve services at our schools for our students. A few of my colleagues from the HSC will follow with more details, but I want to mention some of the reductions we hope you will reconsider.

[01:17:11] The middle school after school program is a safe haven for the 14,000 middle school students who participate each week. The rich offerings, about 30 activities at each school, improve academic achievement and student behavior. Transition services for students with developmental disabilities are both required and critical.

[01:17:30] With federal funding for these services particularly at risk, the county needs to step up to ensure services for some of our most vulnerable populations doesn't disappear. And disabled individuals are in particular need of our support. The justification for reducing the general relief for disabled individuals indicates, in part, that participation in this program has declined thanks to Medicaid expansion.

[01:17:56] But there is reason to worry that Medicaid expansion will be reversed by the current federal administration, and we need to ensure that the most vulnerable of our residents are provided the support they need so acutely. My Budget Committee co-chair, Jayne Edmondson, will speak to you about other specific proposed cuts.

[01:18:13] Now to move from the specifics to the big picture. Please reconsider the depth of the cuts to HHS programs. Spending on human services now will prevent bigger budget spending on human services, education, public safety, and other county services down the road.

[01:18:28] And in times of scarcity, budget effectiveness and efficiency are critical. Eliminating the data analytics unit and Healthy Minds Fairfax's program evaluation will hinder the county's ability to identify what services are needed and what solutions work.

[01:18:46] Decentralization can be good, but some efforts are best done with support from centralized resources. HSC Chair Michelle Medapace will speak some more about these and other big picture considerations. I've also heard several of you suggest that food and beverage tax revenues can and should be used to lower the real estate tax rate.

[01:19:05] I get it. Not only do I pay my real estate taxes, but I also write the checks for my 92-year-old mother, who is a retired FCPS teacher. The announced 1.5 cent increase would raise my mom's taxes about \$120, but she considers that a small price to pay to provide the services that help so many in our community thrive.

[01:19:25] Honestly, I wish you had announced a 5% or 6% food and beverage tax so you would have room to work with, but here we are. Please budget for the maximum rate and use some of that money to fund the critical programs we are highlighting. I'll close by quoting a very wise person who said, Investing in people is not only right morally, but also makes smart fiscal sense.

[01:19:48] The county must continue to play a major role in protecting the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you, Chairman McKay, for your sage words. Thank you for your time and attention. Thank you very much, Paul. Appreciate your testimony. Our next speaker is speaker number 19, and that is Michelle Menapace, to be followed by Jane Edmondson and Bill Bowie.

[01:20:09] Welcome. Thank you. It's good to see you all again. I'm Michelle Menapace, chair of the Human Services Council, and I'm proud to join my colleagues this afternoon offering our advice on the fy26 budget as your hand-picked advisors the human services council takes our responsibility very seriously as Paul mentioned we held a summit and developing our recommendations also included briefings from county staff as well as input from our affiliated boards authorities and commissions we recognize that budgetary choices are particularly difficult this year, but eliminating

[01:20:45] efforts to prevent gang recruitment, to prevent addiction, to prevent homelessness and the like would be kicking a cheap can down the road only for it to become a high-cost impediment very soon. Data analysis is particularly critical to ensuring both cost-effectiveness and efficiency, and that's no more true during these challenging budget times. Please ensure too that reduced staffing levels don't become self-defeating as workloads overwhelm even the most dedicated employees.

[01:21:18] The council sees an apt comparison between the Penny for Housing and the Innovation Fund. Both are investments over time, which create pathways for a stronger, more resilient county budget. And like affordable housing projects, the Innovation Fund's results speak for its continuation. Number one, they leverage non-county resources and then the innovation fund projects through those non-tax resources provide more services than would be possible by tax revenue alone. Secondly, through collaboration, county agencies and private providers have a better

[01:21:55] understanding of the precariousness of the Alice population and how to create new ways to prevent demands for public services and the slide into poverty, which ultimately is much more expensive for all of us. The fund is also triggering greater interest in public-private collaborations.

[01:22:14] Most recently, the council is considering models to address the child care crisis to enhance workforce participation, supporting a SNAP ambassador program to maximize enrollment for qualified families and providing seed funding for a micro food business incubation program, which has the potential to address multiple county priorities. I'll end by emphasizing the council's strong support for maximizing new revenue streams. We appreciate the stress of property tax increases and the need to help residents facing those challenges, particularly

[01:22:49] among the Alice population. Our HHS system provides critical services to these county residents whose elimination could have comparable adverse effects. So we ask why not both? Tax relief and critical human services by adopting the maximum level of new taxes that are partially paid by non-residents. Thank you for your time today and if I might point out there's a leak in the ceiling, back row, right up here. Thank you. Thank you very much, Michelle. Speaker number 20

[01:23:27] is Jane Edmondson, to be followed by Bill Bowie and Hugh Iwanicki. Welcome. Good afternoon. I'm Jane Edmondson, the other co-chair of the Human Services Council. Most of you know me as former Drainsville Supervisor John Faust, Chief of Staff, and before he left office, he asked if I would serve on the council I jumped at the chance because I knew over the years the council has made its recommendation with a mighty voice for those in the county who have little if no voice and that

[01:24:01] voice has always had the willing ear of the board. This is a tough budget with a double whammy of proposed increases in the real estate tax rate and program cuts across the county including human services. No need to mince words, these cuts will be painful, particularly among the most vulnerable of our residents. The Council urges its commitment, the Board's commitment, to five programs. My colleague Paul Thomas spoke about three.

[01:24:34] I'll speak briefly about the remaining two. The Supplemental Supportive and and inclusion services helps bridge the gap between the 14 senior centers and the adult daycare health centers and offers a more affordable option than in-home or residential services.

[01:24:57] While the neighborhood and community service staff may try to shore up this program, there's no denying that a 50% cut or \$600,000 is gonna mean a loss of level of service. The Opportunity Neighborhood Program faces a cut of \$300,000, and this valuable program targets children, youth, families in the six areas in the county that have vulnerable population, and such a cut risks devastating this valuable service.

[01:25:31] I know that you face a tremendous challenge in adopting a balance, a budget that balances the concerns, realistic concerns of taxpayers, as well as your commitment to residents and employees.

[01:25:48] And for that reason, we do support that you are looking into other revenue services, particularly the food and beverage tax, and we support the 4%. These new revenue streams are a way to help shore up these programs that you have committed to and that help the most vulnerable in our county.

[01:26:11] Thank you for your time and your service. It's wonderful to see you all again. Thank you. Thank you very much, Jane. Ditto. Wonderful to see you as well. Our next speaker is Bill Bowie, to be followed by Hugh Iwanecki and Larry Zaragoza.

[01:26:27] Welcome, Bill. Good afternoon. Whoa, I didn't even start yet. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the board. Good to be back. I'm Bill Bowie. I'm the Hunter Middle District Representative and the Chairman Emeritus of the Park Authority, and I'm here for the 19th time to beg.

[01:26:46] So if nothing else, I'm persistent. I'm here to talk to you about rec centers this year. We saw an 8% increase in attendance last year and a 17% increase in membership revenue last year for the rec centers.

[01:27:02] More than 50 years ago, the residents of Fairfax County made a decision to build the rec centers, and that was in lieu of building swimming pools at all the high schools. We managed to build five rec centers in five years in the 70s.

[01:27:22] So needless to say, Audre Moore, Mount Vernon, Franconia, Providence, and George Washington are more than 50 years old. It was a historic investment. And in fact, Audrey Moore was one of the first publicly run rec centers in the country. It was tremendous. They've been self-sustaining. But now the gig's up. It's time that we renovate and build new. And the current model that we have can't be replicated.

[01:28:00] So although we are reopening Mount Vernon Rec Center soon and starting detailed design for Audrey Moore with construction, hopefully beginning with the passage of the 2026 bond, we can only design and renovate one rec center per CIP cycle every six years.

[01:28:22] This would leave Franconia, Providence, and George Washington as aging question marks, and the new facility in Reston needs to be addressed. It's our biggest need from a policy standpoint.

[01:28:41] When schools face similar pressures from aging facilities, the solution was to create a mid-cycle bond. I respectfully ask the Board of Supervisors to consider the same to assist FCPA bring our rec centers up to date.

[01:29:00] Rec centers aren't our only aging facilities within our 75-year-old system. Our deferred maintenance today is at about \$200 million. Yet because of this infrastructure issue, the rec centers will consume more than half of the new bond that comes out in 2026.

[01:29:24] That trend will continue through every bond until all five rec centers are renovated and constructed, and then the cycle will start all over again. So I know this is a tough request. I thank you for your support of parks always, but as we learned during COVID, in times of stress, people look to parks to bring relief.

[01:29:48] We are in the wellness and happiness business. So thank you for your consideration and your attention. Great to see you all. Thank you very much, as always, Bill. Speaker number 22 is Hugh Iwanicki, to be followed by Larry Zaragoza, Joanne Walton, and Joy Bryan.

[01:30:08] Welcome, Hugh. Good afternoon, members of the board. My name is Hugh Iwanicki, and I am a CPA with over 15 years' experience auditing government agencies. I have good news. Unlike most who have come before you, I'm not here to request funding or to oppose spending cuts.

[01:30:28] I'm here to advocate for responsible spending. I represent thousands of Fairfax County residents, working taxpayers, who don't have time to speak publicly, but who are deeply concerned about rising taxes and inefficient government spending. The Fairfax County Taxpayers Alliance has proposed a clear roadmap for reducing waste and improving efficiency without compromising vital services.

[01:30:53] In my own time, I conducted a review of the county's risk management department, identifying inefficiencies and recommending six cost-saving measures, which I'll follow up with a written report later for your review. This is not about asking what the county can do for us.

[01:31:11] It's about what we can do to restore fiscal responsibility in Fairfax County. This year, the board proposed a 7.5% increase in property taxes, following a 6.2% jump in residential assessments. That's the largest increase in a decade.

[01:31:28] Instead of offsetting higher assessments with a lower tax rate, the board plans to add one and a half cents to the rate. On top of that, a new meals tax of up to 6% is under consideration. These increases are simply unsustainable. Many long-time residents may face two grim choices.

[01:31:48] Sell their homes and leave, or risk foreclosure and eviction. This is not equitable governance. It's a crisis of affordability. More than half the county budget goes to Fairfax County public schools, yet the bureaucracy continues to expand.

[01:32:04] Over the past 40 years, student enrollment has grown by 44%, but staff has grown by 94%, while test scores decline. You, the Board of Supervisors, have the authority to demand accountability and to audit the spending.

[01:32:22] The county's budget shortfall is driven in part by unsustainable increases in raises, pensions, and benefits. County employees receive 4% raises annually, well above the 2.5% inflation rate. And pension contributions far exceed what's in the private sector.

[01:32:39] Meanwhile, Fairfax County's tax burden has been growing three times faster than household income for 25 years. The Fairfax County Taxpayer Alliance recommends capping real estate tax increases to match household income growth. Running a more business-friendly county that allows incomes to outpace inflation.

[01:32:59] Consolidating salary increases into one annual performance-based raise, not two. And most importantly, because I'm a CPA, auditing both county and school administrative spending. It's time for action. Supervisor Walkinshaw, Chairman McKay, please step up.

[01:33:18] Fairfax County residents deserve better. Thank you very much. Thank you. Our next speaker is Larry Zaragoza, speaker number 23, to be followed by Joanne Walton and Joy Bryan. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, members of the Board of Supervisors.

[01:33:36] I'm Larry Zaragoza. I chair the Environmental Quality Advisory Council. It's a pleasure to be here. Today I'd like to share with you our priorities for this budget year. First of all, I'd like to highlight some areas where we do have a request.

[01:33:53] One is there is a vacant position with OEC, which is important to CCAP and Resilient Fairfax. It's a manager. The vision, the management, the planning, all of that is important.

[01:34:08] We realize that you may or may not have money for that, but it is a need, and we want to acknowledge that. We also want to repeat what you've heard today about the parks. The parks are very important. Nationally, Fairfax County is recognized for its quality parks.

[01:34:28] Residents appreciate the parks. It allows them to connect with nature and appreciate what we have here in Fairfax County. That's important to keep up. The decreases in trail funding, the elimination of the invasion management position, removal of hazardous trees, those are important things, and reducing port-a-john cleaning.

[01:34:52] These things affect the attractiveness of the parks, and we think they're important. We also want to note that we share with you the concern about wanting to make sure that trash is cleaned up.

[01:35:09] That's important too, all of these things. I don't think I'm saying anything that all of you haven't already said. You guys are aware of this and you care about it. Second ask is related to the Wildlife Management Program.

[01:35:26] This is not a request for money. This is only an ask that you watch to make sure that the transition that's taking place right now will ensure that we continue to retain the services that we have historically had.

[01:35:42] The police department's done a great job historically. Hopefully in the transition, wildlife services will continue to receive the kind of support that they have historically received. And that is the request. Dr. Edwards has done a great job.

[01:35:58] We want to see that continue and get the support she needs. The last item that I want to cover is requests related to FY27. One is, I think, EQUAC, in almost every single year that I can recall, we've always looked for the quarter penny to assist with the stormwater tax because there are needs that are to be filled for the stormwater tax.

[01:36:25] Stream restoration work, flooding work, all kinds of infrastructure that needs work. We do support that. We think that's important, and so I just wanted to highlight that one.

[01:36:42] Also, when it comes to the programs that DPWS has, leaf collection and the collection of trash, it seems to make sense that those programs should fully fund the need, and at present, they don't quite do that.

[01:37:00] I would expect that as we go through the zero-waste planning exercise, that will be addressed, But right now, they fall short of the need, and it seems like reconciling that need would be a good thing to do. Finally, I just wanted to highlight that an investment in the environment is an investment in our future.

[01:37:20] It's important to our quality of life. And again, EQAC is grateful to the board for your support of the environment and your attention to these issues. Thank you. Thank you very much, Larry. Speaker number 24 is Joanne Walton. Okay, we'll try to circle back at that time.

[01:37:47] thank you for letting me know that. We are then on speaker number 26, I'm sorry, 25, Joy Bryan, to be followed by 26, which is Ila Sung and Mina Rodriguez. Welcome. Hello. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Joy Bryan. I am the Chair of the Criminal Justice Advisory Board. We recommend that you increase the pay supplement provided to the staff at the Fairfax County Public Defender's Office from 15% to 25% so that the percentage aligns with the supplement provided to staff

[01:38:24] and the Public Defender's Offices for surrounding jurisdictions. In FY 2017, the Board of Supervisors began providing salary supplements for staff in the Fairfax Public Defender's Office. However, these salary supplements are less than those provided to staff in jurisdictions such as Arlington, Prince William, or Loudoun Counties, which results in experienced staff leaving Fairfax County for higher pay and other jurisdictions.

[01:38:49] In the past several years, the Fairfax County Public Defender's Office has faced a significant increase in the number of cases that it handles. In FY22, the Public Defender's Office handled 5,073 cases. However, in FY24, the Fairfax Public Defender's Office handled 8,365 cases, 3,671 of those cases, which were felonies.

[01:39:14] In addition, due to the increased use of electronic surveillance evidence, such as body-worn cameras, the workload has dramatically increased along with the seriousness of the crimes that the Public Defender's Office is handling. Furthermore, the number of charges per case has increased from approximately 1.1 in FY21 to 1.9 in FY24.

[01:39:34] By comparison, the Fairfax County Commonwealth Attorney's Office maintains a significant advantage in terms of both funding and personnel. For our criminal justice system to work efficiently and effectively, a well-trained and fully staffed public defender's office is essential.

[01:39:51] Public defenders have been involved in numerous programs in Fairfax County, including the Diversion First initiative. As you know, Diversion First offers alternatives to incarceration for individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities who are involved with the criminal justice system for low-level offenses.

[01:40:12] Public defender attorneys represent participants in the mental health docket, veterans' treatment docket, and the recovery court. The Public Defender's Office was instrumental in creating the mental health docket, which began in July 2019. Participants in this docket have varying degrees of mental health and co-occurring issues.

[01:40:30] The mental health docket allows participants to complete different phases of treatment until they graduate, at which time a defendant's charges are resolved. The Public Defender's Office currently represents 22 participants in the program and has represented all 74 participants since it began.

[01:40:50] The Public Defender's Office also currently represents 17 participants in the Veterans Treatment Docket, which began in February 2015. The program, which was the first of its kind in Virginia, is designed to address the mental health and substance abuse issues that often result from the combat stresses of military service.

[01:41:08] In connection with the Veterans Treatment Docket, the Public Defender's Office is responsible for discussing and assisting a client with his or her case, attending pre-docket team meetings, and advocating for the individual in court. Furthermore, the Public Defender's Office currently represents 27 participants in the Fairfax County Recovery Court, which began in December 2018.

[01:41:31] The Recovery Court is designed for Fairfax County residents who are age 18 and older who who have been convicted of a nonviolent crime, were placed on probation, and who subsequently violated the terms of probation due to substance use. The Recovery Court team meets on a weekly basis to review the status of each participant in the program.

[01:41:50] The Public Defender's Office is also instrumental in getting individuals placed in the supervised release program docket. On behalf of their clients, the Public Defender's Office contacts family members and friends, confirms addresses and places of employment, develops treatment plans, and connects their clients with appropriate services. The quality of the services from the Public Defender's Office primarily depends upon its ability to attract and maintain quality attorneys. Furthermore, being able to recruit and hire a diverse group of attorneys with different backgrounds and experiences for the Public Defender's Office promotes the One Fairfax initiative. To ensure

[01:42:27] that the Public Defender's Office can continue to provide quality representation to its clients, We recommend that the board support the public defender's budget request for an additional \$300,000.

Thank you. Thank you very much, Joy. We are now on speaker number 26, Ila Sung, to be followed by Meena Rodriguez, Yogita Kekre, and Mekdes Abtu.

[01:42:52] If I called your name, please be ready to testify. Welcome. Good morning, Chairman McKay and Board of Supervisors. My name is Ila Singh and I am a teacher at the Fairfax County Employee Child Care Centre. Today I come here to speak in front of you all to say my job, my dignity and my identity.

[01:43:14] I usually don't participate in public speaking. However, I am here today because of the county decision. For me, this job is a part of how I define myself. I regard working at an ECC as a matter of dignity.

[01:43:31] I have been working at the Extraordinary Employee Child Care Centre a long time. While working here, I have experienced a quality that I have not found anywhere. The hard work that ECC has put into support the children's growth and development is outstanding.

[01:43:50] In all of my year of teaching, I have not been in an environment so focused on quality, outcome and service to children and their families. As a part of ECC, I am passionately committed to serving our working community.

[01:44:09] I come to work every day, ready to tackle challenge head on. While I can appreciate the need to address the county deficit and budget challenge and make many difficult cuts, the impact cannot only be viewed monetarily.

[01:44:26] The hard work that we put in and others before us cannot be thrown away like this. ECC serve the large community by serving its worker. They can do their jobs because we do our jobs with hard work, talent and dedication.

[01:44:45] I implore you to continue ECC to be operated by the county, not the private provider. By allowing ECC to operate by the county, you are allowing us to come work every day, support and strong.

[01:45:00] Throughout the past week since the budget cut were proposed, we still come to work every day ready to serve families, ready to play, ready to support the children's growth and development and we never miss a beat the maintained quality and care.

[01:45:18] I appreciate your time and willingness to consider the importance of what we do for the entire Fairfax County population either direct or indirectly. Please show us that you value early childhood education by allowing this center to continue.

[01:45:38] Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 27 is Mina Rodriguez-Castro. Are you here? Mina Rodriguez-Castro. Okay. To be followed by Yogita Kekre and Mekdes Abtu.

[01:45:56] Please be ready to testify. Welcome. Hello. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Ximena Rodriguez-Castro, and I'm an eighth grader at Liberty Middle School. I'm here to speak about saving the FCPS after-school programs. After-school is something that doesn't only help creativity and fun, but also academics.

[01:46:16] Middle-schoolers usually don't have time to get things done at school or home, or they just don't understand the subject. For example, at our school, kids can stay after for this activity called the Learning Center. The Learning Center is truly special because you get to have one-on-one work time with your teachers, which is something that you can't usually have at school.

[01:46:35] You get to have, like, special tutoring sessions for topics that you're struggling with, and those, like, those things are critical for learning, in my opinion. The Learning Center has helped me and many of my friends to get things done and understand different topics.

[01:46:51] Another exciting part about after school is the diversity of many fun clubs. Personally, I have participated in theater, art, and learning center. Art and theater have helped me move outside of my comfort zone and explore my creative side.

[01:47:09] The learning center has been a lifesaver when I need it the most. Kids look forward to these and many other activities after school. Some students stay after school because their parents get off late and they don't want to be alone. Some stay to get better in academics, and some stay to be face-to-face with friends when they can't at home.

[01:47:29] I also personally think that being at the school doing something helpful or fun is better than being in front of a screen for, like, hours at your house. The point I'm trying to make is that the program is vital for middle schoolers, and it's great to have equitable experience.

[01:47:50] This issue doesn't affect me at all. I'm an eighth grader, so I'll be in high school next year. But the reason I'm here is because I benefited a lot from middle schoolers during my middle school years. I'm here not for me, but for the future generations so they can have better or the same opportunities that I did.

[01:48:09] Lastly, I also want to urge you to support teacher pay braces. As an eighth grader, I know how crazy kids can get. Teachers repeat themselves so many times to us for simple tasks. They hurt us to class like sheep, and sometimes they need to squeeze answers out of us.

[01:48:27] Teachers aren't there only for you, like the year that they're assigned to be for you. When I was in third grade, I was struggling with math, and my second grade teacher, who didn't work at my current school anymore, she replied to my grandma saying that she wanted to support me in tutoring sessions, and she did it out of kindness.

[01:48:49] She didn't ask for money, so she was doing it out of her free will, her free time. She spent, like, about three hours for, like, a couple days a week to help me in math. And that's just a lot about teachers, about what teachers are willing to do for their students.

[01:49:08] She is, in fact, one of the only persons that I have baked a cake for, other than my parents. And I gave her, she gave me a plushie that I still have in my room that reminds me of her. So, I strongly urge you to consider this after-school program and teacher races as you make this difficult decision.

[01:49:29] Thank you so much for your time. Have a great evening. Thank you very much. Speaker number 28, Yogita Kekre, to be followed by Mekdes Abdu, Abtu, and Dawn Budarak. Welcome.

[01:49:46] Good afternoon, member of the Board of Supervisors. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. My name is Yogita Kekre and I have been a teacher at Employee Child Care Centre for the past 15 years. Employee Child Care Centre is more than just a job for me.

[01:50:02] It is my second home and the people I work with are like my family which is standing over there for me. When I care for the children at Employee Child Care Centre, I treat them like they are my own. I have watched them grow, learn and become confident little people.

[01:50:20] We are more than teachers. We are caregivers, mentors, friends and a source of comfort and consistency for both the children and their parents. The relationship I have formed with both the children and their families are what makes this work so meaningful to me.

[01:50:39] During the pandemic and even through winter storms, we stayed open to support our essential county workers. We showed up every day because we knew how much our families depend on us. While so much was uncertain, we remain committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment.

[01:51:02] Reassuring parents every day to give them a peace of mind knowing their children would be cared for and supported daily. Taking this program away would not only break a part of team of dedicated caregivers but also hurts the families who trust us and their children.

[01:51:22] We are proud of the foundation we built for each child's future, and we ask you to protect the work we do. Thank you for listening. Thank you. Speaker number 29 is Mekdes Abdu. Is speaker number 29 here?

[01:51:39] Okay, to be followed by Dawn Buterak and Joseph Pillow. Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Macdisabto, and I am speaking today in support of the Fairfax County Child Care Center.

[01:51:58] I have been an educator with the Employees Child Care Center for six amazing years. During this time, I have developed bonds and relationships with the children, family, and those at the center. These children are my heart and soul.

[01:52:15] Previously, I worked in different child care settings where they expected children to be able to read by five. But this program and curriculum, they learn through play, as children should.

[01:52:32] We focus on the social, emotional, and what is developmental appropriate so that children are ready to listen to teachers in kindergarten, follow directions, and respect one another. School readiness is so important, and this program supports children in being ready to learn when they get to kindergarten.

[01:52:55] This is a calling. It is not just a job. The love I have for my children is not something that cannot be replaced. There is a love, trust in one another. The impact to the children to just be ripped from the adult they trust, it is traumatizing.

[01:53:17] Consistency is high quality. Early childhood educators are so important to the children. Children need consistency and routines to feel safe and secured. At ACCCC, we meet each child where they are. As we know, they all are different needs.

[01:53:42] There have been no effort to reduce costs and increase revenue, which we know are possible. This center is a model in the community. We are paid living wage, benefits, and retirement.

[01:54:00] This makes us feel valued as educators. Give us a chance to make the necessary adjustments. Thank you so much for giving me this chance. Thank you. Speaker number 30 is Don Buderak, to be followed by Joseph Palau, and then we're going to go back to speaker number 24, Joanne Walton.

[01:54:23] Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Dawn Buderak, and I'm the Chief Public Defender for Fairfax County. I've been the Chief Public Defender for nearly nine years and a public defender in this jurisdiction for over 24 years.

[01:54:39] We're asking that you consider raising our supplement pay from 15% to 25% to align with the jurisdiction surrounding our community. What this does is creates a problem for retaining and recruiting

qualified, dedicated public defenders. As I mentioned in my material submitted to this board, I lost an attorney with 10 years of experience last year to Arlington based in large part on the salary increase that he would get from moving to that office.

[01:55:06] I have been repeatedly told by this board that this is a state problem as I am a state employee. However, I want to point out that in the Fairfax County Adopted Budget Plan that's published online, you refer to the funding you give to the Commonwealth attorneys as a supplement as well. The Compensation Board has been noted in your documentation as having historically underfunded the Fairfax Commonwealth Attorney's Office, and that the county took action to mitigate this effect on the Compensation Board's inadequate funding for the office in Fairfax.

[01:55:40] You refer to it as a supplement because you take money from the state, and then you supplement that salary because you realize that the state does not give enough money for commonwealth attorneys. A public defender's office is absolutely no different. We are funded by the state, but we are woefully underfunded because of a myriad of reasons.

[01:55:56] But what it means is that my counterparts in the Commonwealth Attorney's Office make more money than every person in my office. So if you recall, a handful of years ago, the Commonwealth Attorney's Office essentially held this board hostage by refusing to prosecute misdemeanor cases.

[01:56:18] And then eventually the board acquiesced and said, we understand, you need more funding, and dramatically increase the funding and staffing of the Commonwealth Attorney's Office. They now have 79 employees. I have a total of 41. They have 46 attorneys. I currently have 26 attorneys. We handle approximately 75% of the criminal cases in this jurisdiction.

[01:56:36] You can see that that math just doesn't really add up. They have staff, for example, that include a business analyst and a management analyst. There are four employees that have those titles. I have no clue what those people do, but their salaries amount to about \$400,000. that's the money you give them. I have the authority, pursuant to Virginia statute, to tell the court that I am unable to accept cases based on our workload, but I am never going to do that.

[01:57:06] I am never going to go to the court and tell them that we are unable to help the citizens of this community. It's not what we do, it's not our mission, and it's not what I'm ever going to do to the people of this jurisdiction. As was mentioned by Ms. Bryan when she spoke earlier, my 26 attorneys handled over 8,000 cases last year. In addition to the increase in charge per case, from the documentation I submitted, you can still see the startling racial disparities that represent our clients. The overwhelming majority of our clients are black and brown individuals from this area. After you gave us supplements that were at a flat rate, they were reduced to 15%, and I want to give an example that I think explains why this is inappropriate. Andy Elders,

[01:57:46] my deputy public defender, was recently appointed to be a general district court judge, so he'll be moving onto the bench. I need to promote somebody from within, from my senior management staff, to take over his position. His salary is a flat rate supplement of around \$50,000. But because the person that takes his position will be reduced to the 15%, his supplement will be approximately \$18,000. It's a huge difference in salary. What that means is he will make \$30,000 less than his predecessor. He will also make \$30,000 less than his counterpart in the Commonwealth

[01:58:22] Attorney's Office. And because he's been with my office for so many years and has had raises over the years, his salary will be cut. He will take a pay cut because of the 15% supplement. So he will be promoted to a higher position with more responsibilities and take a pay cut because of the way that the county structures the supplement. The person that I promote to take his position will be moved to a senior position, will likewise face a cut because I have been able to sustain a decent amount of people in my office over the years who are dedicated to being public defenders.

[01:58:57] I want to do a comparison of the senior position in the Commonwealth Attorney's Office. So the senior position in the Commonwealth Attorney's Office is \$129,000 per year. A senior in my office is about \$123,000, and that's including the supplement provided by the county of the 15%.

[01:59:12] I want to tell a couple of examples of stories as to why it just makes me so angry that my attorneys make so much less than their counterparts. A woman was recently promoted to be a senior. There was a time in our court where there were 23 cases for two attorneys to handle.

[01:59:32] Does that mean my time is up already? Yeah, but if you can wrap up real quick. Okay. At any rate, in addition to us being the protectors of constitutional rights of this community, we are also involved in a lot of the things that Ms. Brian mentioned, which are invaluable to this community.

[01:59:54] What that means is that increasing our supplement to create an equal justice system aligns with the One Fairfax mission, and I'd ask that you increase our supplement to 25%, and obviously I'm available if anyone wants to meet with me individually.

[02:00:10] Thank you very much, Dawn. Thank you. Our next speaker is Speaker 31, Joseph Palau. See here? He is to be followed by Joanne Walton. And if I call your name, please come on down closer. Welcome.

[02:00:26] thank you good evening chairman McKay members of the board my name is it is Joseph but I go by Jay so my name is Jay Palau my wife Lori and I live in the Clifton Hunt community where we raised our two children I am a lifelong county resident and a longtime member of Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department retiring in 2019 at the rank of Captain two my last seven years were spent as a station commander of the fire stage of Fire Station 41 in Crosspoint with my

[02:01:02] background in mind, perhaps you will understand some of the serious concerns that I have with the proposed reduction in resources for the Fire and Rescue Department's budget. The elimination of transport units from the Gunston, North Point, Cross Point, and the Clifton State, especially the Clifton Station, is a serious miscalculation. Much, I'm sure, in these three days. Much has been said about the delays in transport of ill or injured patients in what are somewhat remote areas of the

[02:01:34] county, and these sentiments are accurate. There is an even higher potential price for the citizens and responding members if these units are eliminated. In Clifton, removing Ambulance 416 removes firefighters. It is a 30% reduction of available firefighters on a remote scene where additional help is still far from arriving. There is a reason why every medic unit and ambulance are staffed with firefighters, and they're equipped with gear and air packs, and that is to give the

[02:02:11] officers that must make difficult, life-saving, split-second decisions options. I have been in a position to have to make those decisions on a scene where I could not yet even hear another siren coming towards us, knowing we were all we had for now. When the captain on engine 416 arrives at the scene of a house fire, he is counting on the firefighters arriving with him on the ambulance to don their firefighting

gear and SCBA and to be ready for orders to assist with the firefight if there are no immediate medical needs.

[02:02:47] That ambulance crew can man a backup hose line, mount a search for victims, or be assigned many other critical tasks. Eliminating transport units eliminates options on the fire ground, and that could cost the life or lives of victims or firefighters.

[02:03:04] Please do not consider adopting this or future budgets that eliminate options for the brave men and women serving in the Fire and Rescue Department, a department from which I am proud to say I was part of for over 32 years. Thank you. Thank you, Jay. We're going to go to speaker number 34, Joanne Walton, to be followed by Nancy Hall, Watkins Gray, and Courtney McPhee.

[02:03:28] If I called your name, please come on down closer. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and supervisors. I made it again this year. Just wanted to say my name is Joanne Walton.

[02:03:46] I'm a special ed teacher here in Fairfax County Public Schools at a Title I school. I'm also the parent to an FCPS alum and an FCPS student who is graduating next month. I'm also a proud union member.

[02:04:04] First, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for finally adding the food and beverage tax to the budget discussion. I literally cried when I heard the news. Today, I'm speaking to you as an individual to implore you to fully fund our collectively bargained 7% raise.

[02:04:25] Back in 1995, when I earned my first master's, I was not able to find an elementary teaching position anywhere, anywhere on the whole Eastern Seaboard. I took a teaching position in a private school and was paid \$25,000, and it's actually one reason why I ended up in Fairfax County, because I actually found a job here.

[02:04:43] Sadly, 30 years later, salaries remain stagnant while expenses are obviously increasing exponentially. And back then, I was told there was a massive teacher shortage coming in 20 years. But I had \$65,000 in student loans and had to pay them, and I could not wait for them.

[02:05:00] The point being that we knew the teacher shortage was coming and, like usual, did very little to mitigate it, not just here but across the whole country. In fact, we've done the opposite by not compensating all school staff adequately for the past 15 years. And instead, we've lowered the standards for teachers and now allow anyone with a bachelor's degree to start teaching with no experience and no education classes while they're attempting to figure out how to teach.

[02:05:25] They're taking classes at night. They're often placed in the most challenging classrooms and as a result, often quit within the first year. So we're literally, they're just bodies, honestly. The severe shortage of school staff negatively impacts everyone, not just the students whose quality of education is suffering.

[02:05:41] It puts extreme stress on the staff who are trying their best to make up for the lack of support and instruction. Not to mention the families who rightfully worry if their child has an unqualified teacher or may get an unqualified teacher. Or whether their child even has a teacher. Maybe they're going to end up with a long-term substitute.

[02:05:59] It's imperative that you are as transparent as possible about what is happening in this county with those who pay taxes, the majority of whom do not have children in our system. In my neighborhood,

we have a couple of what we call the original owners, right? My elderly neighbor, who regularly requires EMS support, loves to tell the story of how his house was the first one built on the cul-de-sac.

[02:06:20] Our road was a dirt road. His son was one of the first to graduate Robinson 50 years ago. So I was helping him pay his taxes, and he made the mistake of complaining about how high the taxes were. And so I explained to him that I had not had an adequate raise, and I wasn't receiving retirement steps for many years now.

[02:06:40] And he was absolutely appalled. And when I told him about the lack of adequate compensation for firefighters and police, who he sees routinely, and how much of a shortage there are for police officers, he was alarmed, and rightfully so. He had no clue this was happening. And as a Korean War veteran and 40-year federal employee, does he want to pay more taxes now that he knows the status of our public workers?

[02:07:03] Absolutely. Does he want to support a food and beverage tax now? Absolutely. He understands not just the value of a first-class education, but also the importance of providing adequate compensation to public workers. Thank you very much for your time. Thank you. Our next speaker is Speaker 32, Nancy Hall, to be followed by Watkins Gray, Courtney McPhee, and Victoria Weish. If I called your name, please come on down closer. We've got a lot of seats down here. And we're on speaker number 32, Nancy Hall. Welcome. Thank you, Chairman McKay. Good

[02:07:40] afternoon. I am Nancy Hall. Speaking as a citizen of Fairfax County, I am on the Human Services Council. As I was starting to prepare my remarks, all I could think of was, we are Fairfax County. We take care of our own. Having said that, I appreciate the new restrictions that you face as you craft the budget that is fair for all of the county.

[02:08:02] I support the advertised increase in the real estate tax rate, even though it will raise the rate for homeowners usually passed on to renters, an additional \$50 per month. Also, I encourage you to minimize this increase. I recognize that the board is aggressively pursuing alternatives to this onerous amount.

[02:08:23] I support the food and beverage tax, particularly if they could mitigate the property tax levied against our most financially vulnerable communities. Ideally, the benefits would go proportionally to both the Fairfax County public school system and the overall county requirements.

[02:08:39] I support the proposed \$8.5 million increase in additional funding for the Affordable Housing Development and Investment Fund. Aligning with that, please reaffirm your commitment to the goal of 10,000 new homes by 2034.

[02:08:56] I support the middle school after school program. I believe it can be funded by the creative balancing of the family's resources with the county's investments. The genesis of the program was anti-gang, but my interest is in protecting the females through their witching hours.

[02:09:17] After they come home from school, leave the safety of the school grounds before their parents get home. It is important for them to learn how to make good choices for themselves and others that will further their education. Additionally, transition to kindergarten tees our students up for their best experiences as they enter the public school system.

[02:09:38] The transition services program for former students with developmental disabilities is an outstanding example of how we take care of our own, as are the supportive and inclusion services

provided at the senior centers. Opportunity Neighborhoods is a stellar investment, demonstrating how few funds and lots of attention can help our communities thrive.

[02:10:03] I oppose any attempts to generate revenue through gaming by the county. Gambling, even though legal, is a threat to public safety and exacerbates addictions. As a human services advocate, I would discourage the county from inviting this not-victimless crime into our community.

[02:10:22] So what is my ask? Fairfax County is the best place to rear a family, enjoy the fabulous parks, worship, read, or play at the libraries, benefit from and contribute to our public school system, and retire. Thank you to the Board of Supervisors, the county executive, Brian Hill.

[02:10:42] Chris Leonard was here, and the many others who struggle with the numbers so that Fairfax retains its best characteristics now and into the future. Thank you. Thank you, Nancy. Speaker number 33 is Watkins Gray, to be followed by Courtney McPhee-Victoria Weisch.

[02:11:00] Welcome. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, members of the board. My name is Watkins Gray. I am the Deputy Volunteer Lead for the Community Emergency Response Team, CERT. I'm also a volunteer firefighter with the county with over three decades of work.

[02:11:17] of experience. When COVID-19 hit the county, many families in the county suffered from food insecurity. Working in cooperation with the offices of Supervisor Lusk, Supervisor Smith, CERT helped provide leadership, planning, logistics, and personnel in order to provide over 4 million pounds of food to families in need. This type of disaster response is what CERT does through training and organization. CERT members provide over 20,000 hours of service annually at a value of over a million dollars.

[02:11:54] The proposal to eliminate the CERT program would save the county \$34,000. The return on investment and ratio of value to cost is roughly 29 to 1. By now, you've received letters, emails, news interviews, community newsletter articles, hundreds of petition signatures, and testimony over the last three days, all supporting CERT.

[02:12:21] In our training, if our training residents how to deal with large and small emergencies by offering hundreds of free classes, including Stop the Bleed, CPR, and emergency preparedness, are offering traffic and crowd management to provide for, keep the public safe at major events, and are supporting first responder training with victim role players, are offering canteen services to police and firefighters,

[02:12:52] and are maintaining a vetted, trained, equipped, and organized team of members acting as a force multiplier during major disasters. If providing all of that does not convince you that CERT is worth saving, there is nothing more I can offer.

[02:13:10] You have many difficult decisions to make in the upcoming weeks when deciding what to cut and what to keep. We feel and I hope that you agree that saving CERT is an easy decision and one that is right for the county. The tremendous value that CERT offers far outweighs its minimal cost.

[02:13:30] Thank you for your service to the county, and thank you for listening. Thank you very much, Watkins. Speaker number 34 is Courtney McPhee. Speaker number 34, Courtney McPhee here. Speaker number 34, I do not see.

[02:13:47] Speaker number 35, Victoria Weich, to be followed by Olivia Weich and Corey O'Rourke.

[02:14:23] Hello, and thank you for having me here today. My name is Victoria Weich, and I am in third grade. I attend Bull Run Elementary School. I was very sad to hear that the after-school programs and the summer VIP program are going to be cut from this year's budget.

[02:14:40] Although I'm in third grade, I was looking forward to being able to participate in these programs when I got to middle school. My brother is currently a Liberty Middle School student and attends these programs both during the school year and in the summer.

[02:14:58] We've seen huge growth in our brother in so many areas. These programs have helped him to gain confidence, to become healthy emotionally and physically, and to find his love, which is volleyball. Programs like this are crucial to ensure that kids have access to safe environments after school while their parents are at work or school.

[02:15:24] Many students using these programs have no other options, nor do their parents, for being able to pay for private clubs or private classes that would take up their time after school and keep them safe until their parents get home.

[02:15:40] The middle school after school program serves over 23,000 students during the school year. These programs have been proven to improve school attendance, to improve academic outcomes, and the health and mental health of students using these programs.

[02:16:02] These are environments that allow students to have access to trained and supportive staff. Lastly, these programs were created to combat the rising gang recruitment that was taking place in Fairfax County.

[02:16:20] By cutting these programs, you send the message that you do not care about us. I urge you to gather and support additional funding streams to ensure that our school budget does not suffer. Please work with the school to ensure these two vital programs are not cut from this year's budget.

[02:16:40] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Great job. And our next speaker is Olivia. Tough act to follow.

[02:16:56] Hello and thank you for having me here today. My name is Olivia Weitch and I am in third grade. I obtained Bull Run Elementary School and yes, that was my twin sister who just spoke. As my sister stated, we were both very sad to hear that the after school programs and the summer VIP program are going to be cut from this year's budget. And while I agree with everything she stated to you, please do not cut them.

[02:17:23] I want to speak to you about the additional proposed cuts. One such cut would eliminate the school crossing guards at the high schools where one of my brothers attend. Bottom line, crossing guards help keep students safe. Many high school students walk to and from school.

[02:17:41] They already face many difficult things at this age, but trying to dodge traffic just to attend school should not be one of them. I also want to talk to you about the importance of the young children having access to quality, affordable early education programs like Early at Start, Head Start, the Bridge to Kinder program, and Young Scholars programs.

[02:18:05] My sister and I are products of all these programs. As a result of these programs, we are proof that they work and the impact they have on a child's educational path. I am happy to report that both my sister and I are in full-time level 4 AAP classroom.

[02:18:23] We can both read at a high school level, which is evident by our testimonies here today. Please continue to support the expansion of the Head Start programs in the county, and please work with the school to find ways not to eliminate school crossing guards, the Bridge to Kinder program, or the Young Scholar program.

[02:18:44] In order for our future as a society to move in a positive direction, we must invest in our youth. After all, they are our future leaders, teachers, doctors, and even presidents of tomorrow. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[02:19:09] Our next speaker is speaker number 37, Corey O'Rourke. Is Corey O'Rourke here? Speaker number 37, Corey O'Rourke. I don't see anyone. Speaker 38, Kia Cole-Hines, to be followed by Maggie Sager and Jay Spiegel.

[02:19:28] If I called your name, please come on down close. We don't want anyone falling down the stairs.

[02:19:49] Well, that's definitely a tough act to follow. I was hoping somebody went in between us, but that's fine. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay, members of the board and County Executive Hill. My name is Kia Cole-Hines, and I'm the president, CEO, and a proud alumni of Leadership Fairfax. Leadership Fairfax appreciates all the work and time that you guys have put into us.

[02:20:09] We are proud to partner with the county in developing its own leadership pipeline and count Supervisor Lesk and numerous current and former leaders throughout the county among our nearly 3,000 alumni. As the region's premier leadership program, our mission is to help our participants grow into leadership roles, unite them with other leaders from throughout the community, crossing all sectors to include government, business, non-profit, education, health care, land use and development, public safety, finance, and others so that we can all work together in maintaining and expanding the benefits and opportunities that make Fairfax County such a

[02:20:45] thriving community. We appreciate the incredibly challenging budget situation and choices the board and community are currently facing. I would like to commend the board and county on two investments in particular on which we currently collaborate and see room for growth. We understand youth programming and supports are a topic of great discussion.

[02:21:05] Over the past five years, we have worked with Neighborhood and Community Services through our Youth Leadership Network. But we know there is so much more we can do, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can further support our community's young people on their leadership journeys, which we hope leads them to remain and or give back to this wonderful county.

[02:21:22] I also want to thank and commend the county for its continued commitment to the principles and practice of One Fairfax. It is more than a policy. It speaks to our values and identity as a community. Building on the county's efforts, Leadership Fairfax launched the Inclusive Leadership Institute this past year.

[02:21:39] Like our other signature programs, the Inclusive Leadership Institute is an experiential program that offers participants the opportunity to explore the themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion to gain a deeper understanding of the historical context and ongoing disparities related to race and ethnicity experienced here in our community and others.

[02:21:57] The goal is to foster a collective commitment among cohort members to advance racial equity, building an alliance of leaders dedicated to driving meaningful change within their organizations and the community. We are thankful for our collaboration with the county to develop this community-facing extension of One Fairfax.

[02:22:17] As you know, such programs in both the public and private sectors have fallen under intense scrutiny, if not outright assault, as a result of the sharp criticisms from the current administration. The malicious effort to rid the federal government of references, programs, and funding related to equity and diversity has rippled across the local governments, higher education, and the private sector, which are also pulling back for fear of drawing negative attention from the current administration or losing federal formula, grant, or contract dollars for any number of invaluable programs, which would only exacerbate the difficult financial situations many communities are facing.

[02:22:54] The fear and uncertainty being felt in the community is real, and it is palpable. Amidst this storm, one Fairfax stands as a beacon, both as a safe haven and a call to action. Diversity and equity have been twisted into politicized buzzwords, but we cannot allow them to be co-opted as partisan values as they transcend politics.

[02:23:16] Inclusion and belonging are human values, and Leadership Fairfax is proud to stand with Fairfax County and to be your partner in growing community understanding, acceptance, and commitment for us all to succeed as one Fairfax. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you very much.

[02:23:32] Figure number 39 is Maggie Sager to be followed by Joe Spiegel, Jack McHugh, and Brian Frank. If I called your name, please come on down. Welcome. Hello. I am an 8th grade student at Liberty Middle School, and I'm here today to speak in support of the SCPS after-school program for middle schoolers.

[02:23:52] To do that, I would like to talk about a food drive that was held here at my middle school a month or so ago. The food drive heavily relied on the fact that we students could stay after school. During the first meeting, we learned skills from community members who came to this school to teach us, and then we collaborated with each other to set goals and action steps.

[02:24:12] From this, I learned how to persevere, advocate for myself, set realistic long-term goals, and break those goals into more manageable chunks. If we never had after school, we would not have been able to learn these critical skills and be motivated to achieve these goals. Additionally, we would not have been able to effectively advertise to others if not for the after school program.

[02:24:34] I stayed after with my fellow students several times to create and hang up posters, flyers, and banners. This allowed those from outside the food drive to gain information and the motivation necessary to donate. It also gave students a new perspective on food insecurity and the challenges people in our community face.

[02:24:52] Lastly, students were able to collaborate after school to sort, count, and package the donations. We were so motivated that we finished packaging over 1,800 individual items of food and hygiene products in around an hour. This was on a Friday afternoon where not a single student was rushing to get back home.

[02:25:10] Everyone was extremely motivated and excited to be helping those less fortunate in their community. In short, we all feel empowered. Before I end my remarks, I want to give a special thanks to

our after-school specialist, Ms. Donlan. She doesn't just run the after-school program, she helps around the entire school, especially with our student government.

[02:25:28] She makes sure our voice is heard with the leaders in our school. She's not the only one who supports us kids. Our teachers also deserve more because, well, they have to deal with kids all day. We can be a lot, but teachers still stick through it with a smile. I strongly urge you to save the after-school program and give our teachers a little more.

[02:25:47] Thank you so much for listening and all your hard work over these past few days. Goodbye. Thank you. Thank you. Our next speaker is Jay Siegel, to be followed by Jack McHugh, Brian Frank, and Marliana Funes.

[02:26:04] Marianella Funes, I'm sorry. Welcome. Mr. Chairman, members of the board, I'm a senior citizen standing before the body that is trying to tax me out of my home. So this is no time for diplomacy. When you all ran for election in 2023, I don't recall any of you saying that if elected, you would enact a meals tax.

[02:26:24] The concept has been voted down twice in referenda. As soon as you were elected, we began to hear about your wish to enact a meals tax by a board vote. I heard Chairman McKay and Supervisor Stork assure us that if a meals tax were to be enacted, the sole purpose would be to diversify sources of revenue, not increase revenue.

[02:26:42] On September 17, 2024, a paper appeared on the county website concerning the meals tax issue. I've given you pages 3 and 5 from that paper. Page 3 shows a pie graph detailing all revenue sources without a meals tax. Page 5 shows a pie graph with the meals tax revenue added.

[02:26:59] Notably, in the page 5 pie graph, none of the revenue sources besides the meals tax are reduced from the page 3 pie graph. So when you say the goal would be diversification of revenue, not increased revenue, taxpayers shouldn't believe you. As Supervisor Herity has preached for years, we need a full audit of the county budget.

[02:27:19] You seek more revenue from us, but squander our tax money on projects like the recent expenditure of \$3 million to purchase an unbuildable parcel on Richmond Highway. It's long past due to tighten our belts. The only way members of the board can retain any credibility are to either wait until 2027 when you're up for re-election and state your intentions to voters for a meals tax or hold a referendum.

[02:27:42] I've heard Chairman McKay and Supervisor Stork claim that our schools are underfunded by a half a billion dollars. I'm skeptical. The World Population Review ranks Virginia Public Schools fourth best in the country. It seems the school system is sufficiently funded. Over a recent 18-month period, our school system spent \$9 million on outside lawyers when hiring of inside lawyers could save us millions.

[02:28:04] The DEI Department has almost 40 employees making more than \$100,000 a year, and its leader makes more money than the Vice President of the United States. A serious audit is in order. Once you transfer the money, you lose control over it. And no money should be transferred until the allegation of embezzlement against the school board's budget chairman is appropriately resolved.

[02:28:26] Giving \$2 billion to an accused embezzler would be malfeasance in office. And Mr. Chairman, I want to hear you proclaim that we are the safest jurisdiction of its size in the country. I have to wonder

what are the statistics to back up that claim. What I know is we have a prosecutor who doesn't request cash bail, refuses to prosecute entire categories of crimes, and has a poor track record prosecuting serious crimes.

[02:28:48] Yet the board has granted him budgets far in excess of those received by his predecessors. Meanwhile, our sheriff and school board have enacted a trust policy that involves resisting cooperation with ICE. These facts make it impossible to even know with any degree of certainty how safe we are. Whenever I speak to our excellent police officers, all I hear is frustration that they make arrests and nothing happens to the alleged criminals.

[02:29:10] So with all due respect, claims that we are the safest jurisdiction are a little more than inaccurate political talking points. As I mentioned at the beginning, this is no time for diplomacy. Please tighten our belts and let's get going. Thank you very much. Thank you, Jay. You can Google Major City Chiefs Association and you'll see the ranking of our number one safest jurisdiction of our size in the country.

[02:29:32] That's not my statistic. It's a major city chief's association. But it's based upon convictions, and we don't want to get in it. It's not a back and forth. I'm just making sure the public watching knows that's not a county number. That's the major city chief's association number. But you state it, and it's not true. Thank you, Jay. Speaker number 41 is Jack McHugh, to be followed by Brian Frank.

[02:29:58] Good afternoon. My name is Jack McHugh, and I am presenting today in support of the Employees' Child Care Center, ECCC. I work for Fairfax County Public Schools, and my wife works for the Fairfax County Government.

[02:30:15] We have been fortunate enough to have our two children attend this wonderful center with caring and knowledgeable staff. The center is a model for quality care within Fairfax County and within the state. This is easily visible every time you walk into the center and witness the interactions between the educators and the children.

[02:30:33] When we drop off our kids every day, I know that they won't just be taken care of, they'll be treated like family. The educators care deeply for our children and are happily to work with them to pursue their passions. Now, I know it's odd to say that my two-year-old is pursuing his passions, but you didn't know him during his Moana phase.

[02:30:49] During that time, his teachers embraced his love for Moana. They incorporated into games for counting, into music for dancing, and even into drawing and painting. I see how they do that for each child by identifying their interests and bringing them into the classroom, and the children really learn well from that.

[02:31:04] One of the reasons we chose ECCC was based on the testimony from other parents who previously had children attend. They describe the impact of this program on their family and the subsequent decision to stay with the county later on. ECCC has a significant recruitment and retention tool, or has been a significant recruitment and retention tool for these individuals and for many other county employees.

[02:31:29] Additionally, national research supports this type of on-site child care as an effective recruitment and retention tool. One of the many reasons we love ECCC is at the end of each week we receive a weekly report detailing the unique and sometimes funny things our kids did during the day.

[02:31:47] The things they sometimes miss as a working parent are certain words, learning to jump, things like that. At first I thought this was just a cool little thing that they did, but later I learned that this weekly report was part of the center's process in documenting how our children grow and develop in language, gross and fine motor skills and social emotional development. The teachers create a binder for the parents at the end of the year detailing how the child learned and developed during that year. This is huge. We as parents easily miss the daily purposeful guidance that these incredible teachers provide to our children.

[02:32:27] With all that said, we understand that this is a very tough budget year, so I encourage you to review the cost cutting measures put forth by ECCC parents and the current county budget proposal does not have any cost savings until fiscal year 27.

[02:32:45] Please give us the opportunity to save the county money in fiscal year 26 while working towards a sustainable future plan in the years to come. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 42 is Brian Frank and after Mr. Frank speaks, our next block of speakers 43 through 51, need translation services, and will not be here until 7 p.m.

[02:33:09] So after this testimony, we're going to skip all the way up to speaker number 52, just making sure folks are aware. Welcome. Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Brian Frank, and I'm a supervising real estate appraiser for Fairfax County's Department of Tax Administration.

[02:33:26] I'm here today to ask you to reject the proposal to eliminate the Fairfax County Employees Child Care Center as a county-operated program. Not only is my son Miles a child at ECCC, but my wife has also worked at the center as an early childhood educator for the past 11 years.

[02:33:43] I've been lucky to know the quality and dedication of this center long before I became a parent there. My wife has been in the field of early childhood education for her entire career and always insists that she would never work in another classroom outside of ECCC. Fairfax County has long recognized these early childhood educators like her as dedicated professionals, especially during the pandemic.

[02:34:03] While much of the world shut down, ECCC stayed open. My wife and her colleagues showed up every day before the availability of vaccines facing the unknown so that county employees, including first responders and emergency personnel, could keep doing their essential jobs.

[02:34:20] That is the level of dedication these educators bring, and they've continued to do so even as their jobs are now threatened by this proposal, showing their commitment to public service, something Fairfax County prides itself on. Now these educators face displacement, and the children and families they serve face uncertainty and a lesser standard of care.

[02:34:40] Now that I've gotten to see the direct effect ECCC has had on my son's education and development, I realize the immeasurable impact the center has on the children, families, and on the county even more deeply. I proudly tell my co-workers that my child attends the center and urge any co-worker expecting a child to use the center.

[02:34:58] While I've worked for the county for nine years, I know my future is here, if only so that, any other children that I may have will have the opportunity to get the quality early childhood education ECCC offers. I've seen the relationships my son has formed with his teachers and the continuity of the excellent care he has known since he was three months old.

[02:35:18] The proposed budget states that there will be no disruption in service to participating families. I think any parent would agree that having their child's dedicated, quality teachers that they are bonded to, displaced into other positions and replaced with brand new people would certainly disrupt their child's well-being.

[02:35:34] Further, no one has been able to explain how this proposal, if implemented, could possibly cause no disruption in the lives of the children and families. In just two months, ECCC families and staff have developed a sustainable cost-saving plan that would reduce expenses to the county in fiscal year 26, more savings than the current proposal, which offers none.

[02:35:55] Yet that plan hasn't been given a fair chance. I ask that you give these educators and families the opportunity to work with the county to implement these cost-saving solutions so this high-quality county-run program can continue to support county employees just as we continue to serve our public.

[02:36:14] Thank you again for your time today. Thank you. We are going to move to Speaker 51, Vostina De Novo here, okay, to be followed by Susan Anspach and William Hansen.

[02:36:31] If I called your name, please come on down close here. We are on Speaker 51. Good afternoon.

[02:36:48] Good afternoon. You guys picked up some momentum, didn't you? Okay, ladies and gentlemen of the board, thank you very much for the opportunity to express my concerns about new generations. It's a program that you've heard about from several other speakers this week.

[02:37:05] My name is Vostina DeNovo, and I am deeply concerned about the impact that losing this program would have upon women with few other options. You've heard from graduates about their experiences and concerns. You've heard from an accomplished obstetrician with 28 years of experience about the devastating harm of untreated substance abuse.

[02:37:24] You heard from Mr. Jones earlier about how the CSB is committed to serving vulnerable populations. The question before you has been more or less whether to preserve this valuable resource or not. I believe that there is a much more practical and relevant question to ask, and that is, is right now the right time to close this program?

[02:37:45] I would urge you to consider that it is definitely not, given developments that could not possibly have been foreseen at the time that the decision was made to close new generations. The CSB announced its decision about new generations in late August of 2024 with a plan to provide services at Crossroads for the population that we serve, Crossroads being then the largest residential facility in the CSB.

[02:38:09] Who could have known in August that Crossroads would suffer two facility disasters that winter, resulting in the complete evacuation of the population to a new beginning and detox? Now, to their credit, the amazingly resilient staff at these three programs have given heroic efforts to continue providing their best services under these incredibly challenging circumstances of having three programs compressed into two sites that are much smaller than the larger one was in the first place.

[02:38:40] However, the original plan is no longer a practical plan, as Crossroads, unfortunately, is now a residential program without a residence and is, in a manner of speaking, currently homeless. It will take some time for Crossroads to become fully operational again, and we understand that's a truly huge undertaking.

[02:39:02] With cornerstones also on the cut list, what does that leave? Is this really the best time to lose even more beds for women in need? Both A New Beginning and Crossroads transfer women to new generations who are having difficulty with treatment in their co-ed settings. Sexual trauma and addiction are often intertwined.

[02:39:21] Where would these women go? As you heard from Eva on the first day, for some women, 28-day programs are too short for them to stabilize enough in their sobriety for long after leaving. The number of women in need of services is highly likely to increase. It is now the right time to close this program. So back in August 2024, no one could possibly have foreseen the current administration's assault on the federal government and the shockingly sudden and widespread job loss of federal employees. This upheaval has had the greatest impact right here in the DMV. In Fairfax County

[02:39:59] alone, more than 14,000 federal employees have been laid off. And Mr. K., you commented on how devastating this would be economically for Fairfax County. It's also devastating emotionally to the employees, to their families that are now without incomes and often without benefits.

[02:40:18] And in these circumstances of crisis, normal people struggle more with drug and alcohol abuse, family conflict, domestic violence. People who are already struggling get worse in these times of crisis. So I would implore you to extend our funding for at least one more year, at least one more year. One year would allow crossroads to get situated at least temporarily while they're building their permanent facility. It would allow hopefully the world to just settle down a little bit so that people would hopefully be a little healthier. And in that time, we would implement new strategies to increase utilization, including a 30-day stabilization track that would make us

[02:40:56] more competitive with other programs. So I implore you to really consider the impact of this decision. Thank you very much. I understand speaker number 46 is here and It somehow got caught in the translation section but does not need translation.

[02:41:13] Speaker 46, Morgan Green. Is speaker number 46 Morgan Green here? Okay. We will go to speaker 52, Susan Anspach. Susan here?

[02:41:30] No. How about William Hansen, speaker number 53, to be followed by Shamima Tasman and Tracy Becker. If I call your name, please, please come down to the front.

[02:41:58] Okay, Supervisors, thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Bill Hanson. I'm from Burke, Virginia. I'm here to speak about the fire department's cuts. I understand every department has to take cuts, but I really disagree what they put forward.

[02:42:14] You don't take off the front-line firefighters off without cutting the headquarters. The other part of this is, remember, you bill for EMS. So if you cut EMS units, you're not going to be able to bill.

[02:42:30] Fairly simple. I would also remind you that Task Force 1 returned about 30 days ago from a deployment. The units that fill that come from rescue squads, engines, ladders. If you start cutting those, you have less people to fill those task force.

[02:42:49] I learned a long time ago when I was in the Army not to present a problem without at least one solution. One solution I would recommend for you to look at is cut one of the deputy chief's positions. Years ago, not years ago, but four or five years ago, we had one deputy chief that covered the entire county during his tour of duty.

[02:43:13] A couple years ago, when funding was good, we expanded that to two. So maybe we cut that back to one, and that gets you some funding back. Subject to your questions, that's all I have.

[02:43:28] Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Hanson. Appreciate your testimony. Shamima Tasmin, to be followed by Tracy Becker, Eli Bulletin. If I called your name, please come on down. Welcome. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, McCoy, and other board members.

[02:43:46] Thank you for this great opportunity to talk to you today. I'm Shamima Tasmin. I work as a teacher at ECC last five years, bringing my over 20 years experience working in the World Bank, UNICEF, and a lot of multilateral organizations traveling to East Africa and South Asian countries.

[02:44:10] In 2019, I really take a big decision in my life to change my career path from global-level work to directly work with the children. That has been my passion for a long, long time, and I want to fulfill that passion.

[02:44:32] And one day, I really found ECC in my neighborhood when I was jogging in my neighborhood. I saw the children was coming out from the Pinano building, and they're walking and playing at the playground. And I entered the building, and I found ECC right there.

[02:44:49] And following a year, I applied for my teacher position, and I got the positions. So that's my story to work with the ECC last five years earlier. Last month, one of my children at PK classroom asked her mommy why her mommy is so busy talking with other ECC parents after the work.

[02:45:15] And mommy replied to her, they wanted to save ECC and they wanted to save all the teachers at ECC. They love so much ECC. The following day, Brain came to me and she said, Ms. Shamima, we don't want to miss you.

[02:45:32] We don't want to miss any teachers of ours. I'm scared to go to any new centers. I love you. And she gave me a big hug. And that is the thing we are doing at ECC. We are just creating connection.

[02:45:48] We are not teaching alphabet. We are not letting them to memorize mathematics or any academic things so strictly way. We are just telling them how to build relationship, how to create connection with your parents, with your friends, with your family, and how to grow as a good human being.

[02:46:13] So that is our ECC. I love to say that ECC should be and is a model and should remain as a model for whole Fairfax County and in Virginia. Whenever we have a lot of conference and seminars and I present myself, I am an ECC teacher, everybody recognized me. Oh yeah, ECC, they are doing so well. And I feel so proud of myself. Actually, we are not software developer with high paid, but we are brain

[02:46:49] developer. Every single day, we are helping our children from zero to five to help their brain to develop. And all Harvard research studies shows that more frequently you give hug to your children, the faster their brain will be developed. And we are doing that in ECC. ECC is not only a child care center but it is a learning hubs. We are practicing culture, learning culture and we get four days in a year professional days and each and every teachers we are developing the theories of

[02:47:28] development of childhood and all the latest research. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you so much and thank you to save our ECC and our family. Thank you. Our next speaker is number 55, Tracy Becker, followed by Eli Bulletin and then Janine Dean-Purdy.

[02:47:48] Is Tracy Becker here? Come on down. Thank you so much. Shall I start the timer? They'll take care of you.

[02:48:04] Very good. In any event, I know that Chairman McKay is here somewhere, and to all of you honorable members of this board, thank you so much for hosting these important community conversations. It's an endurance test for you, I know, and I'm not alone in applauding you and your stamina and your graciousness in dealing with this all, so thank you so much.

[02:48:25] My name is Tracy Becker, and for nearly 30 years, I have had the distinct pleasure, honor, and privilege of calling Fairfax County home. McLean is where my husband and I built our home and our family. Our daughter, Lindsay, was diagnosed with autism when she was three years old.

[02:48:42] And shortly thereafter, I left my legal career as an aviation and satellite lawyer, because other than my husband, I knew that no one else in the world would devote so much time, energy, and all the love it would take to give Lindsay and secure for her a bright future.

[02:49:00] The last 24 years has been quite a journey. It's been a fulfilling journey with moments of pure joy, but also profound pain from time to time, as you can imagine. On the joyous part Lindsay is enrolled in Northern Virginia Community College she is participating in the college steps program there and because she has a disability developmental disability waiver waitlist slot she is eligible to receive self-directed services funding for her college steps services they have

[02:49:39] been wonderful college steps provides one-on-one services for students much like Lindsay. She's very close to receiving her Associates of Fine Arts from Northern Virginia Community College, and I'm going to be really obnoxious and brag to you that she's been on the Dean's List of Scholars, and she's an inductee of the Phi Phi Phi Kappa Honor Society as well. It's a remarkable achievement. She's an extraordinary personification of persevering. But after watching Lindsay struggle her whole life with anxiety, depression, some

[02:50:18] some occasional thoughts of self-harm. I can tell you that me, my biggest milestone and accomplishment in her involvement in College Steps is to see that she has friends. She has this sense of belonging about her now. It's a beautiful thing to see.

[02:50:33] I sleep so much better than ever before in my life now. It's the best. College Steps works. It just works. They have given us the most profound transformation in Lindsay's growth. It's the secret sauce for my daughter, and I know it's the secret sauce for many of the students like her, especially at Northern Virginia Community College.

[02:50:56] Part of the painful part is what we're experiencing now, because we College Steps families have been informed by the Community Service Board that the self-directed services funding can no longer be used for College Steps. We have a real simple ask for you, real simple.

[02:51:16] Right now, the funding for SDS, for our population, for our community, is at \$10,000 for fiscal year '26. We're fine with that. We are grateful for that. We're thrilled with that. What we do ask is that you prevail upon the CSB and the other decision makers in this process to continue to allow families what the SDS funds are for, flexibility.

[02:51:41] Give us the flexibility to use those funds for college steps as we have. It works. It's not broken. It doesn't need to be fixed. We're fine with the reduction in funding. 10,000 works for us, we will figure it

out, provided we still have access to college steps and their services.

[02:51:59] They're in six, seven states, 20 campuses, it works. They know what they're doing. I do thank you, you've all helped us create a community where people like Lindsay are valued everywhere. Your acknowledgements and proclamations on autism awareness do not go unnoticed and we sure appreciate it.

[02:52:16] Thanks so much. - Thank you so much. Next is Speaker 56, Eli Bulletin, followed by Janine Dean-Purdy, and then Cynthia Olarico will be a phone call. Hi there.

[02:52:34] My name is Eli Bulletin. I'm a resident of Hunter Mill District. I am here excited and nervous to share that we are mere days from owning our own home here in Fairfax County. We moved to Virginia just over a year ago and have been renting up to now.

[02:52:51] Like so many couples with a young child who find it's time to move out of the district, We looked at parts of both Maryland and Virginia. We chose this area based on a number of factors, but most of them center around our child. I want her to, um, I need her to be safe, so public safety is a clear priority.

[02:53:09] She's also a nature lover, and I grew up in Montana, so we found ourselves drawn to areas with great outdoor spaces. But when it came down to it, when we finally made our decision, it was based around the schools. This is for two reasons. Number one, obvious, we want the best for our daughter, for her future.

[02:53:26] Number two, after my folks divorced, my dad moved far away, but he chose his next home based on the school system, just in case I ever moved there. I never did, but he never left. Because it turns out a place that cares about its schools cares about everything else as well.

[02:53:43] I can say that we have been so, so impressed with the teachers at her elementary school. My daughter gets extra support at school, and it's working. She's thriving. I've seen those support needs actually decrease over time. Her teachers are amazing, and I actually learned things about my own kid from them that can only be learned from people who love working with kids.

[02:54:06] It's clear they're driven by a passion. But I can also tell you that as teachers leave, due to normal circumstances like starting families and simply retiring, there is definitely concern about replacing them with the same level of talent. When the cost of living locally continues to rise, and property taxes are part of that equation, let's just say it's more expensive to settle here than it used to be.

[02:54:29] The magic of the Internet is that I got to see exactly how much more expensive it was than maybe just even a few years ago. But we are committed to this area. We're committed to the future here. Now, our daughter isn't in middle school yet, but it'll be here before we know it.

[02:54:44] And I've heard nothing but rave reviews so eloquently from those third graders, my goodness, about the middle school after school program that are facing cuts, programs that I want around for her, too. And when our neighborhood just had police respond to a huge crowd of students who gathered off campus for a fight, I'm no expert, but I feel like maybe we need more activities for these kids, not fewer.

[02:55:07] So maybe they have a wider variety of healthy ways to keep kids engaged in their community. I'm not an expert enough in this area to pretend to be able to say where money must be spent or where it could be cut. We just moved here, practically speaking.

[02:55:23] But as you move forward and make your budget adjustments, know that for our family, having a strong school system with teachers that can afford to live and work here, providing programs that support our kids in multiple ways, it's just as critically important as having safe streets to walk around and fast response times for all of our first responders.

[02:55:41] I wish you all luck finding that balance. Thank you so much. The next speaker is Janine Dean-Purdy, followed by Cynthia Olarico, and followed by Bethany Heim. Good evening.

[02:56:03] Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Jeanine Purdy. I am a lifelong resident and taxpayer of Fairfax County and have lived in the Franconia and Mount Vernon districts for more than 64 years. My primary concerns tonight are the affordability of living in Fairfax County, taxes, and secure and supportive housing.

[02:56:26] Let me start by saying I support the food tax as an offset of property taxes. I'm fortunate to be able to afford to eat out on occasion despite extra taxes I do this in Arlington in DC and in the city of Alexandria. I believe it's important that we work hard to add to our coffers in ways that make sense. The meals tax is not an undue burden on me and I applaud the proposed implementation of the tax and that it includes assisting the businesses that impacts with support to administer and collect that tax. My family and I are northern

[02:57:02] Virginia natives. My husband and I hope to age in place and wonder how long we can do that in Fairfax County. I shared my concerns about the regional cost of living during Supervisor Lust's town hall meeting. I feel strongly that Fairfax County needs to assure that all individuals and businesses pay their fair share of taxes. I recognize the benefit of our Economic Development Authority and their work to attract businesses to our county. I ask that, unlike our president's desire to serve the rich with tax cuts, all of you as leaders in our county assure that the tax

[02:57:40] burden is shared with the wealthy and lightened as able on the lower income residents. My family serves our community as part of our faith. Occasionally when calls for assistance come to a church, my pastor husband often turns them over to me to assess and assist part of those extra duties as assigned. In 2020, just prior to the impact of COVID, I met a family in need of food.

[02:58:07] A friendship has formed with this family. Their housing has been unstable for the last seven years. They've accessed our shelters, including Kate Hanley Shelter, hotels, motels, and Section 8. But our services have failed them. While it's easy in hindsight to see where mom's actions may of a time exacerbated some matters, county and non-profit services have added to this debacle.

[02:58:36] While visiting with the family in a motel on Richmond Highway, I was surprised to learn from a local non-profit staff person that it wasn't okay for me to visit. Apparently, they signed paperwork that said no visitors would be allowed in the motel. I understand the need to limit visitors, and yet I believe rules should be more specific, possibly referring to no overnight visitors. Living life sometimes takes a village. I'm not sure who yours is, but I try to be a part of theirs. I am a non-profit leader, former non-profit leader, faith community member,

[02:59:14] trusted county employee, and would appreciate being able to support this family. My final comments come asking you to consider home sharing issues. Things that AARP has many times shared are important to folks as they age in the community. Their 2018 report said that adults age 50 and older are sharing their homes with others as they age. They may even prefer to live alone, but they say they might

share their home if they needed help with everyday activities, companionship, or extra income. Older adults are showing strong interest in other housing options

[02:59:52] like villages. Most adults, especially older adults, prefer to remain in their current home communities as they age. Please help us to do that. Let's work to combat the epidemics of loneliness in Fairfax County. Thank you. Our next speaker is Speaker 58, Cynthia Alarico. Is Cynthia here?

[03:00:15] Yes, I'm here. It's phone. You hear us? Go ahead. You can speak. Okay, thank you. Good evening, members of the board. My name is Cynthia Alarico. I was actually there earlier. I was a mom in a blue shirt with a young toddler who fell and bumped into the chair and I just kept thinking to myself why do I have her here and she should be at ECCC where she's safe and sound at her awesome daycare.

[03:00:37] Anyways, she's okay, thank goodness. I have been an employee of Fairfax County Government for 14 years now with the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. I am very proud to be working for this county's government and proud of the work that we do to be one of the nation's leading county government systems. My daughter Liliana has been attending ECCC for almost two years now and as you know or have heard in the last two evenings, the care that the children receive there is priceless. I remember when I became pregnant in 2022, many of my close colleagues and friends encouraged me to tour the center and sign up for the waiting list. They always shared great quality care and how gratefully it impacted their children's lives. My husband and I decided

[03:01:15] to tour the center when I was about seven months pregnant. We really didn't know what to expect, but Ruth gave us not only a detailed tour of the center, she went through most of the rooms to show us what the children were doing and working on so that we can observe them in their natural settings. We were able to see both sides of the daycare center and even interact with some of the teachers and ask questions.

[03:01:34] I was truly expecting maybe a short 15, 20-minute tour. It turned out to be almost an hour. And right away, my husband and I knew that this was a center for our daughter and placed her on the waiting list. We toured a few other centers, but nothing honestly compared to the high-quality care and center that ECCC is.

[03:01:50] The model that the center follows and the resources and services that they provide for our children is truly unbelievable. The teachers there are just the best and have become extended family members to us. I cannot express how much it means to me that I'm able to go and visit my daughter during lunch break.

[03:02:06] It truly gives me such peace of mind that she is right there and I'm able to go in to see her when needed. It has become such a nice routine for my daughter and I to commute to work together and drop her off at daycare as I go upstairs to work. When my husband and I learned about the potential budget cuts, I literally cried.

[03:02:22] I had just given birth to two weeks prior to our newborn daughter, Olivia, who was already on the waiting list. We hope to start her this fall and have both of our children enrolled at ECCC. Now with a potential budget cut and outsourcing of the center, we are unsure of what our child care will look like in the future. This is causing undue stress and uncertainty, as I do not believe privatizing child care is the right solution or the right thing to do.

[03:02:45] It was said that there will be no impact to the children, no break in service, and it will be a seamless transition. And I honestly can't comprehend how that would happen and how that's possible. If this change could potentially remove the teachers and staff that the children see every day and replace them with a brand new center and brand new staff, I feel that that would be such a negative impact on the children and potentially cause unnecessary trauma and stress.

[03:03:09] I really do hope that you, the board, can hear how much of an asset the center is to its county employees, and please consider this from being cut or privatized. Thank you again for your time and consideration this evening. Thank you. Our next speaker is Speaker 59, Bethany Heim.

[03:03:27] Is Bethany here? Okay, next is 60, Alvaro Luna. Is Alvaro here? Okay, 61, Linda Byrne. Don't see Linda.

[03:03:44] 62, Andrea Falcon Hagen. Come on down. I'm going to call a few more. 63 is Diego Vidas Agus. Is Diego here? Come down closer, okay, if I call your name. Rob Whitfield, I don't see.

[03:04:02] And then Michelle Cadiz. If I call your name, come down closer. Go ahead. Oh, okay. Go ahead, thank you. Good evening. My name is Andrea Falkenhagen. I'm a resident in the Providence District and a soon-to-be Thoreau middle school mother.

[03:04:20] I'm here to ask you to please save the middle school after-school program. Cutting funding for it will harm the safety, mental health, and academic achievement of the roughly 24,000 students who participate in it each year. Surveys show our middle school students are less socially engaged than they used to be, spending more time alone on the internet.

[03:04:38] cutting this program will only exacerbate this problem many students 39 of them according to the district will be coming home to empty houses at 2 30 pm for several hours until their parents return and my daughter is one of these statistics with no supervision many students will fritter away the afternoons at best texting gaming and scrolling tick tock that's a waste and a recipe for poor mental health in addition many students are still lagging academically behind where they they were pre-COVID. The after-school program provides free tutoring and teacher office hours, which are essential for student achievement. This is especially true for families who lack

[03:05:17] the money to hire private tutors or perhaps can't help with homework because of language barriers or working long hours. If you do cut this program, I'm really concerned that it will be up to each individual school and PTA to fill the gap, as we do for our elementary schools. As a PTA volunteer who has run our local elementary's after-school programs for three years, I am here to tell you that is really not a suitable alternative.

[03:05:43] It's very hard for schools with a high percentage of two-parent working families or single parents to find volunteers to run these programs, and the result is an unequal patchwork situation across the county, where some schools have a lot of high-quality programs and others have nothing. And of course, even at the schools that do have the programs, only some families can afford to pay the hundreds of dollars that these programs cost.

[03:06:05] This is not the direction our county should be heading. All students should have access to these programs that enhance school attendance rates, achievement, mental health, and self-confidence, especially during the challenging middle school years. I urge you to think about your own legacy as board members, and please let it be one of staunchly supporting our youth.

[03:06:25] Thank you. - Thank you. I'm gonna go back to 61, Linda Byrne. I see she's here. - I was watching at home on television, and the traffic was heavier than I expected.

[03:06:43] Chairman McKay, who's not in the room, the rest of you, my supervisor, Dahlia Palchuk, and my ex-supervisor, Kathy Smith, and the rest of the board. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Linda Byrne.

[03:06:58] I've been a Fairfax County resident. I just realized it's over 50 years off and on. I'm here today to advocate strong and sustained investment in two Fairfax County's greatest public assets, our libraries and our parks.

[03:07:15] Together, these spaces serve as the beating hearts of our communities. Residents of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds utilize these spaces to learn, connect, and thrive. Fairfax County Public Libraries provide free access to books, the Internet, and digital resources for thousands of residents every day.

[03:07:34] Technology access is vital for today's everyday existence. Libraries bridge the digital divide. They provide space for students doing homework, job seekers building resumes, and for seniors keeping up with new technologies. Libraries offer essential programming for both children and adults.

[03:07:54] They promote early literacy through story times, student workshops, English language classes, and more. These programs build community support families and provide long-term learning at no cost to residents. As Fairfax County explores the role of artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, our libraries are well-positioned to offer public education and training, but they need the resources to evolve and provide cutting-edge learning for our communities.

[03:08:26] Our parks. The Fairfax County Park Authority manages over 23,000 acres of green space, providing places to walk, play, relax, and connect with nature. Parks support public health, reduce stress, improve air and water quality, and offer accessible recreation for all, regardless of income.

[03:08:45] With growing urban development and climate challenges, our parks are also critical infrastructure for stormwater management, tree preservation, and urban cooling. Libraries and parks are cost-effective, community-centered infrastructure. They prevent problems before the problems start.

[03:09:03] They support working families. They make our county livable, healthy, and future-focused. So as you make tough decisions in this year's budget, I urge you to prioritize funding for our libraries and parks, not as nice-to-haves, but as essential services. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to keeping Fairfax County a place where everyone can belong and flourish. Thank you. Thank you, Linda. Our next speaker is 63 Diego Vida-Segas, followed by Rob Whitfield, that I guess will be a call, and then Michelle Cady. So if I called your name, come on

[03:09:39] down. Good afternoon, supervisors and everyone here tonight. My name is Diego Vida-Segas, and I'm a seventh grader at Poe Middle School. I'm here to speak on behalf of many students who are deeply affected by the possible elimination of the after school program. For me, this is personal. I have ADHD, and sometimes it's really hard for me to concentrate in class, but the after school program has helped me more than I could say. Options such as teacher help and homework cafe give me extra

[03:10:18] time to focus, do my homework, and ask questions I didn't get to ask during the school day. Without the support, I wouldn't be doing as well as I am. I also have heard that one of the superintendent's

goal is to improve academic performances in FCPS.

[03:10:34] And I believe that the afterschool is part of the solution. It gives students the tools, time, and support we need to succeed, not just during the school day, but beyond it. This program has also helped me in other ways. Even though I'm Latino, I'm part of the Asian and Pacific Islanders Leadership Group.

[03:10:54] That might sound surprising. But it shows how the after-school clubs help us learn about each other's cultures. We become more empathetic, respectful, and understanding qualities that matter in our diverse community and in life. A few weeks ago, Mr. Francisco from Fairfax County's Young Violence and Gang Prevention Program came to speak at our school.

[03:11:15] He talked how important it is for kids my age to have a safe place, meaningful activities, and trusted adults. The after-school program gives all of that. It protects us from making dangerous choices and gives us a place like we feel like we belong. So I ask you, would you rather invest in our future where kids like me can become doctors, legislators, even teachers, or just kind human beings?

[03:11:39] Or would you rather invest in building prisons because students that don't have this support become easy targets for gangs and dangerous paths? I know budgets are hard. I know decisions like this aren't easy. But I believe we should invest in students, not cut the things that help us grow.

[03:11:59] Please don't take this opportunity away from us. This after-school program is changing lives. It's helping us become better students. We need this. I need this. As the great philosopher Pythagoras once said, *Educa los niños y no tendrás que castigar a los hombres*, which translates to English, Educate the children and you won't have to punish the adults.

[03:12:25] Thank you for listening, and thank you for believing in students like me. And this was from Mr. Harsh at Paul Middle School and Mr. Hoffer at Luther Jackson. Thank you. Thank you very much. Well done.

[03:12:48] Now we have Speaker 64, Rob Whitfield. Rob, can you hear me? Yes, can you hear me? Yes, we can. Go ahead. Good evening, Supervisor Smith and the board. I'm Rob Whitfield. Among other things, I'm with the Fairfax County Act.

[03:13:05] I've been in county board meetings for about 40 years. And so I've learned one of the things I think to the speakers over the last couple of days is how few members of the business community seem to be participating in the board's activities.

[03:13:30] And perhaps that underscores a problem we have in the county is that it's obvious that we have people who need social services, you know, interest in libraries, parks, and so on. But we've got to get...

[03:13:48] Rob, you're coming in and out. We can't hear you right now. I tell you what, let me, can I call you back in a minute then? I'll go to, sorry, I have a, can you hear me now?

[03:14:04] I can, we can hear you now, yes. Okay. So the county's going to have to set some goals for spending cuts. And truthfully, if you set a goal of like a million dollars a day for the school system and a million dollars a day for the county, that would be 365 million each.

[03:14:28] That's whatever. That's \$730 million over the next year. I know that's a large number, but if you don't set a big goal, you're not going to meet it. Right now, we are facing a serious problem in the office market with property values, and therefore the portion of the tax base that's resting on the shoulders of the residential market has increased proportionately.

[03:14:56] But we need to find, other than the meals tax, that that's not the real solution. We have to work with the state to get a more equitable funding mechanisms to the – I mean, there's a lot of high-income jobs here, and much of our income tax goes to the – well, it goes to Richmond.

[03:15:21] So we've got to work with our legislators. I particularly work on transportation issues. Unfortunately, our present supervisor in charge of the Transportation Committee hasn't seen the proposed six-year transportation priority plan.

[03:15:39] The present plan expires at the end of June, and I have not seen any information about the proposed plan. Meanwhile, we have a proposed billion-dollar-plus plan, Active Fairfax, for which no possible funding exists. Let's speak about priorities, but what do we—not what— I'm losing you again a little bit, Rob. Rob, time is up, so I thank you for calling in, and I'm going to move on to the next speaker. Thank you.

[03:16:18] Okay, now we're on Speaker 65. Michelle Cades. Is Michelle here? She is on the telethon. I'm here. Hi, Michelle. Go ahead. Thanks. My name is Michelle Cades. I'm a 27-year Sully District resident, and I'm imploring you today to fully fund the FCPS budget and services from the CSB.

[03:16:39] I have three students who are all twice exceptional. They're both gifted and have an array of disabilities. They're now a college graduate, a college student, and an almost high school graduate, and they all received special education services from preschool through high school. Their countless hours of remediation and therapies have paid off thanks to incredible FCPS and CSB teachers and therapists and community workers.

[03:17:02] These people are not budgets or line items or financial figures. They are Oak Hill teachers David, Gretchen, and Pam. who saw that beyond poor spelling and writing, my sons were creative and bright problem solvers.

[03:17:18] They are Carson instructional assistant, Mavis, whose one-on-one support empowered my daughter to manage difficult situations. They're Chantilly staff, Sarah and Kristen, Sonny, Kat, Nick, and two Sams, who fiercely advocated for my kids to create environments and opportunities where they could be successful and feel confident about their abilities, who each became the safe people that my kids knew they could count on throughout their challenging years of high school.

[03:17:45] There's CSB therapists, Birgit and Anna and David, who facilitated a virtual parent group for us for three years during the pandemic, where we tackled problems and topics like parenting kids with disabilities, with substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and more. We celebrated some kids' graduations and we mourned the overdoses and deaths of others.

[03:18:05] When will our community and our society recognize the value that these educators and therapists and service providers bring to our children and families and pay them accordingly. It is shameful that we have to protest and testify and beg and demand that our school system be fully funded to meet the needs of all students.

[03:18:23] At a time when the federal government is decimating the civil rights of students with disabilities, when they're threatening to cut Medicaid funding, which helps to cover the cost of these services and supports, it's being left to our state and local governments to make up the financial differences. These people and programs are vital to allow children like mine to live as independently as they can contributing to society not just through holding jobs and paying taxes but also by living within

our county and reminding us that we all collectively are responsible for one another as members of a just and caring community. I ask you to please allocate the county budget to fully

[03:19:00] fund our schools and CSB. Shift the priorities. Implement a food and beverage tax. Do what you must. These are people who are literally saving lives and building an inclusive future for us all. Thank you very much for listening.

[03:19:15] Thank you very much. Our next speaker is speaker number 66, Sharda Gilkey, will be followed by a phone call. And then Nicole Lansdowne will also be a phone call, number 68. So we are on speaker number 66, Sharda Gilkey.

[03:19:33] Welcome. Good afternoon. Thank goodness for the express lanes. I heard you cut out a bunch of speakers, and I'm like, okay, got to go. Chairman McKay, Board of Supervisors, good afternoon. First of all, hello, Jeff.

[03:19:50] I've known you since you were Chief of Staff to Dana. Long time ago. Now we both have gray hair. That's right. That's true. Full disclosure, I donated to your first campaign. I was unemployed at the time. You refused my donation.

[03:20:08] I'm now retired. Well, first, I want to say I appreciate your time and dedication to the county, to Fanconi and the county. Now, I'm terrible with numbers, but one in particular stands out in my mind right now.

[03:20:25] It's \$13,000. That's my current property tax. I can't afford it anymore. So I moved, and I pay half of that. And fortunately for you, Rodney, I'm still in your district. That's my introduction.

[03:20:43] As you know, the country, the entire state of Virginia, this county, and many of our neighbors are in crisis mode. Crisis mode. Financial crisis mode.

[03:21:00] When I'm under financial stress, I don't go on shopping sprees, I don't even go on vacation. So I'm here today to ask, are you out of your minds? You're asking your constituents to pay more real estate taxes and are adding a meals tax.

[03:21:18] Are you out of your minds? Look at the - no, this is my notes. So here's my advice to raising taxes during this crisis. Stop this train before it crashes.

[03:21:36] To this budget, I say no. How else can I say it? No. No, no, no, no.

[03:21:53] WTF? No. For the hundredth time, no. I'll skip all the other no's. That's all I have to say.

[03:22:12] Thank you. Thank you, Sharda. Appreciate your testimony. We now have a phone caller, Natalie Duncan. Is Natalie on the line? Okay. I am here. Welcome. The floor is yours. Well, thank you so much. Good evening, everyone.

[03:22:29] Thank you so much to the Board of Supervisors. Thank you so much to their support staff because I did experience some technical difficulty. So thank you all so much for your hard work on today and since Monday. First off, I would like to thank all of the students and parents who have been supportive of the middle school after school program during this time.

[03:22:52] Your advocacy has been extremely heartfelt and touching. I am Natalie Duncan. I am an after school specialist at Irving Middle School. And I would like to inform all of you that I am a product of Fairfax County Public School.

[03:23:09] From the moment I entered at Franconia Elementary until I matriculated across the esteemed West Potomac High School. I will say when I was a student at Mark Twain, I did not have the pleasure of having a middle school after school program.

[03:23:27] We had a few activity days throughout the year. And from there, I was able to participate in like a track and field meet at the end of the track, at the end of the track unit for PE, which a few of my, a few of us were able to compete against students from Hayfield and Key at what is now Lewis on one particular Friday out of the year.

[03:23:58] And I learned how to throw the shot put from there that sparked my interest in participating in high school, where I was able to garner a scholarship to Virginia Commonwealth University after winning all of the awards, such as all states, all regions, all districts.

[03:24:23] And I would like to say that not all of the students will have that opportunity if this program is cut. Just with the mere few activity days that I had, that's my story. but unfortunately, not all kids are interested in sports, and that is fine. Our performing arts programs are robust. We have debate. We have model UN. We have henna clubs. We have a myriad of different activities and clubs in which our students are able to express their voices

[03:24:58] and express themselves, build community, build relationships, and have like interests with their peers. I'm sure there have been several impassioned testimonies that you all have heard as far as these programs are what drives some of our students to come to school, that has uplifted their social and emotional learning, that has those that are more reserved, that has opened up to different programs and activities.

[03:25:36] So what I ask of you all is to not allow for our students to suffer the consequences and be punished by taking away a program that is so vital to them. Thank you, Natalie. Thank you.

[03:25:52] Thank you very much. Appreciate your testimony. Do we have Nicole Lansdowne on the line? Can you hear me okay? Yes. Welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you. Good evening, members of the board. My name is Nicole Lansdowne, and I am a resident of Fairfax County, a parent of a FCPS alumnus, an employee of Fairfax County Public Schools, and proud Fairfax Education Association union member, speaking as an individual.

[03:26:19] Two months ago, it was disheartening to see that the Board of Supervisors advertised budget underfunds FCPS by \$150 million. Underfunding the school system would negatively impact students, parents, employees, and the community. As a parent and educator, I cannot imagine students not having access to a wide variety of arts, music, and career and technical education, middle school, after school programs, and other programs that enrich their educational experience, or summer programs like Bridge to Kindergarten or SOAR that provide additional academic support or the expansion of early childhood education programs to additional schools.

[03:26:58] Staffing of positions may also be impacted, resulting in higher class sizes and special education and multilingual learner caseload increases, as well as increased workload for food services, transportation, warehouse, and skilled trade workers whose departments are already understaffed.

[03:27:15] Underfunding FCPS significantly impacts 27,800 employees whose health care premiums continue to increase at a rate at least twice as much as their compensation increases, if compensation

increases at all. Last year, FCPS employees received a 4% pay increase, but the health care premium of one health care provider increased by 15%.

[03:27:37] In my 31-year career in FCPS, there have been many years when I worked additional jobs to supplement my income. Unfortunately, this is a common narrative amongst educators, both in the instructional and operational staff classifications. When will one job be enough?

[03:27:53] The Fairfax County government and community have often described the school system as excellent, providing a world-class education, a crown jewel that helps attract new businesses and residents to Fairfax County. But that world-class education is only sustainable if the Board of Supervisors fully funds the FCPS fiscal year 2026 budget.

[03:28:14] appreciate the board's work towards implementing a meals tax and urge you to develop a robust plan to implement that tax no later than January 2026 with the commitment to use some of the revenue generated to restore the fcps transfer to at least its 25-year average of 52.4 percent thank you for your time this evening and good luck with the work with the budget thank you very much. We are going to go back to understand Speaker 60, Alvaro Luna, is here.

[03:28:46] Is that right? It is right. We're going to go to you at this point. We missed you earlier, but thank you for attending. Hello. Good afternoon. Good evening, chair and members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Alvaro Luna, and I stand before you not only as a proud resident of Fairfax County, but also as a civil engineer, an immigrant from Nicaragua, and a community advocate who has volunteered extensively in STEM programs for

[03:29:24] youth. Before I said anything, I just want to also congratulate you because Fairfax County attracted me for being a place where education, and just as a note, you are the only county, and perhaps the only state, with so many computer clubhouses around the world. And for countries like Mexico with only two clubhouses, you got about 12 clubhouses. So it's an amazing job what you've been doing through the years. So with that in mind, I came to this country and this county seeking the opportunity I never had back home. Not to say that I couldn't live there, but the

[03:30:03] vision, the desire to do things, what we would call the American dream in the sense of what you pursue. And a place where education was valued, where vision shaped investment, and where the future of our children was a shared priority. And for many families, after school programs are that opportunity. They're more than a service. They're a lifeline. So I want my statement to serve as a look to the future. And I was thinking about coming here today because I normally don't like these things, but I decided to do this because I want to have a record. So if in the future,

[03:30:41] something changes, I can tell my kids, this is what I did, but didn't happen. So this is a call from the past to the future. Coming from a country, and you know now all these Latin American countries go through a lot of turmoil, and the reason is lack of education.

[03:30:59] And what I have seen here, when I was coming back, I was listening to what people were saying, and you have two issues, accountability and education. Those are the main concern here. And I think some of the things that we need to think is more outside of box. Like the first thing that goes to the chopping block, education, and that's the last thing that we should cut.

[03:31:20] And if you think about it, maybe there are other ways because for my knowledge, I have seen a structure that are already in the county that needs to be audited to the point that you can strip things to get

really the front line of the life of this county.

[03:31:38] So positions that you may have two or three assistant directors to positions where you have all these wonderful people that maybe make half of what these people make. And so you may be able actually to start cutting some of these levels and look at the possibilities that these jobs don't disappear. Thank you very much.

[03:31:57] Appreciate it. Thank you for your testimony. We now are going to go to, there are two videos that we're going to go ahead and play. Video number 69, Joseph Eisenberg, and number 70, Whitney Redding.

[03:32:15] Hello, my name is Joseph Eisenberg. I'm a rest-in resident and my daughter attends the Fairfax County Employee Child Care Center. My wife has already provided testimony on this matter as a proud Fairfax County employee, and today I'm providing testimony as a deeply concerned parent. The Employee Child Care Center is much more than just a place where we drop off my daughter each morning.

[03:32:35] It represents stability, security, and a nurturing environment where my child and many others are thriving. The teachers and staff there don't merely provide child care. They offer critical early education, guidance, and social development that significantly influence our children's growth and well-being. Closing the center would affect countless families, disrupting not only daily routines but also our children's emotional and educational progress the center is not just the convenience it is a vital support structure that allows many fairfax county employees to fully engage in their jobs knowing our children are safe loved and well cared for

[03:33:10] the ecc symbolizes fairfax county's commitment to supporting its workforce maintaining the center sends a powerful message about how much fairfax county values its employees promotes work-life balance and is committed to the next generation these values are crucial for attracting and retaining dedicated and talented employees, directly benefiting our entire community. The county's own strategic plan has some good guidance. Strategy EO2 says focus efforts on removing barriers such as child care that limit participation in the workforce and employment related programs. Strategy EO18 says leverage the county's position as a large employer

[03:33:47] to build a diverse representative workforce and to provide access to key employment supports such as child care. I'd also like to share that while I don't personally work for Fairfax County, like all of you, I've dedicated my career at public service. Since moving to Fairfax County in 2021, I've always viewed Fairfax County as the premier public sector employer in the region. However, the notion that such an essential and high-quality employee benefit could disappear at a moment's notice, essentially on a whim, with no notice to the ECC staff or parents is deeply troubling. Losing the center would make me strongly reconsider ever working for Fairfax County,

[03:34:23] as I couldn't trust the employee benefits that I rely on would be there tomorrow. I know you care very much about attracting and retaining the highest quality employees. Fairfax County residents deserve that, but eliminating the ECC runs counter to that goal. I ask that you carefully consider the profound impact this closure would have, not just on the kids who attend, but on employee morale and the sense of community the center has worked so hard to build. Keeping the Employee Child Care Center open affirms our shared commitment to the families who serve Fairfax County every day. I'm asking you, please do the right thing and save the ECC. Thank you very much for your time any consideration.

[03:35:05] It's Whitney. I'm with Friends of Homes Run. That's Whitney Redding. And we are a 501c3 stewardship group in Mason District mostly and a little bit in Providence. And I'm here to talk about the park authority budget for FY26 and to especially urge, even in such a difficult budget year, that you consider restoring the \$200,000 that was to be cut or is to be cut from the forest contracting, forestry contracting budget.

[03:35:34] Just because those things sound sort of, you know, kind of abstract. I thought I'd just show you one of the many trees that came down during one of the huge sort of weird windstorms that we had recently. This tree came down. It was kind of like the mama tree to a lot of these baby trees that are now going to go and climb up like crazy. So in the case of the budget, what happens when you only, what has happened for many years is that the park authority budget has only been able to cover the worst case scenarios for trees that are the highest risk. And that's kind of been the status quo. Last year, finally, the Board of Supervisors said,

[03:36:13] oh, let's bump it up. And that was great because in order to get to the point where we're taking care of all those high-risk trees, in order to get to the part where we're talking about preventing more trees from becoming so high-risk, you need to up the budget. So with this year's budget, it's understandable that there's a need to cut back all across the board, but when the county park authority budget is only 0.65% of the overall budgetary pie tied or so with libraries for the least piece of the pie, but are getting a disproportionate percentage of the cuts.

[03:36:52] I think \$200,000 isn't so much in the grand scheme of a multi-billion dollar budget, but it is kind of a lot when you're talking about the actual service it provides to one of the funded agencies. So the reason this is important is not just because it keeps you in the game of getting the high-risk trees, but also because it means they don't have to rob Peter to pay Paul and the Park Authority to fund the kind of forestry services that would then keep these trees from becoming a big deal. Why is that also important? Because these are, you know, we have

[03:37:28] fire, we have, you know, police, we all understand schools. Those are all great services, but it's also a service of the county, albeit an invisible one, to have clean air, clean water. Each tree, that's a mature tree, can absorb 11,000 gallons of stormwater in a single growing season. If that goes down, if it gets toppled by all the invasive vines, by the weird storms we're having, ultimately what that ends up being is a loss to the county of its investment in its ecological services. So if you think of that, say 11,000 gallons of stormwater per tree that goes down, and you figure that tree

[03:38:03] had X number of years that it could have lived on if it had been cared for better, then that's how much you are losing per tree. And it's happening all across the counties. This is just one small example. Looking over here, you can see how much work it is to take this stuff down when it falls down onto a path. So it's not something that they can just simply have a staff three, come out and take care of it, that kind of thing. I also would like to say for the same reason, if there is any money, any big wiggle room, all those other services within the FCPA that take care of our natural resources are super important, like having a permanent invasive management specialist

[03:38:39] in the IMA office that has been requested. They can go with the contractor, but ultimately you need to have the ability to ramp up the work by volunteers like myself who give the county free labor and all together account for thousands and thousands of hours and untold dollars in the amount of work that we donate to preserving these natural resources. So the final thing I'll say about the natural resources is

that we can't live without them it's not just a nice to have and you can't afford them on the basis of camp fees and golf course fees those kinds of fees can help pay for all the other kind of built

[03:39:18] infrastructure maybe such as more rec center upkeep but when you do that you put the price of those services out of reach for people who can't afford them in the first place and you are also keeping the the county's professional ecologists and staff focused on making money instead of what they really got hired for so do yourself a favor and invest in yourself first put money in your own bank account before you pay for the other things that are a little bit more short term so this is one of those long-term invisible things that if you don't pay attention to your natural resources you won't notice it

[03:39:56] until the tipping point has been reached at that point ecological services have a way of compounding and the loss becomes too big to overcome. So please think about that relatively small reinvestment into those ecological services for long-term longevity. Thank you.

[03:40:15] Thank you. And I know we have a block of speakers to go back to that need translation services that are not here yet. So I have a new speakers list of people who did not sign up in advance to testify, who wish to testify, and there are 17 people listed on that list, and I'm going to begin down that list, and I might shift back to the folks when they get here.

[03:40:40] So that means we will go now at this time to speaker number one on this new list, which is Max Siegel. Max Siegel here. Max Siegel. See Max Siegel. How about Vinnie Montaz? Vinnie Montaz is here. Doug Taylor. Doug Taylor. Sharon Heyman.

[03:41:03] We will hear testimony in that order. If I called your name, please come on down here close to the front. Again, that's Vinnie Montaz, Doug Taylor, Sharon Heyman, and David Jacobson. And you are Vinnie Montaz?

[03:41:20] Welcome. It's your turn. Good evening, Chairman and members of the board. I would like to come to you to present my support for raising in the budget for Fairfax County education.

[03:41:40] Right now, we are facing troubling times with this current federal administration, and a lot of parents are not feeling seen or supported in a time where the federal workforce has been deeply cut.

[03:42:01] And there's a lot of people looking for jobs. They want their children to be supported. They don't want the financial burden and the problems that they face at home to impact their children. And with the cuts, the potential cuts to child care, it becomes difficult to support their children.

[03:42:23] It becomes difficult to provide a community for children to grow up, get a great education, and not have to feel the direct impacts of this current administration.

[03:42:42] We are looking at unprecedented times, and as an educator, I see how the burden of the outside world impacts the children. I see how it makes a difference in their daily lives, and being able to come to school can be an escape.

[03:42:58] Being able to provide after-school resources to these children, these students, it becomes more than just education. It becomes a support system. It becomes their community. And with that budget being able to pour into these students, it pours back into the community, it pours back into the adults.

[03:43:21] It gives us the freedom to be able to handle these newfound issues without having to worry about the future, without having to worry about our children and whether they're getting a good education, whether they're getting support in their after-school programs.

[03:43:38] It will really make a large impact on all of our futures, making sure that we make a bigger investment into these children. I see how the outside world is deeply affecting them, and there are too many problems going on for them to directly impact our kids.

[03:44:01] So I would like to come here to support a bigger budget for our education and making sure that our children have child care, making sure that our parents have that support to be able to handle everything that's going on outside of the school system. Thank you. Thank you. Figure number three is Doug Taylor. Doug Taylor is here, Sharon Heyman and David Jacobstein. Welcome, Mr. Taylor. Good evening. I'm Doug Taylor.

[03:44:38] I'm a claim resident of nine years and a parent of two school-aged children. I'll start, as most have, by advocating for a particular program, the middle school after-school program. This program keeps kids safe, reduces pressure on our public safety services, and helps students explore what paths they might want to pursue in high school and beyond. So I think it would be foolish and short-sighted to think of this program as just an expenditure or a line item in the budget.

[03:45:07] It's really an investment. It's an investment in our kids that pays off for the county both in financial and social terms, in the short term and in the long term. I feel like cutting this program would be the very definition of Pennywise, Pound Foolish. Now, like yourselves, I've listened to over 100 of our fellow citizens over the last few days speak, or at least in one case last night sing, about the services that they care about the most, just as I did a minute ago on behalf of the middle school program. And I've been particularly struck by the deeply personal and brave stories

[03:45:43] that many have shared, from life-saving public safety interventions to the critical impact of social services for people who are helping to turn their lives around and become thriving members of our community. So it's been eye-opening, and I appreciate the sort of educational aspect of this process and seeing the diversity of services that the county does provide.

[03:46:03] But we're a community. We're not just a collection of individuals. And it feels a bit unnecessary to have this food fight where everyone's here just advocating for the thing that they know personally and that has affected them personally, because we don't all experience all dimensions of the county services.

[03:46:20] And I get that we're in a tight budget environment, and I appreciate the county executive team's effort to identify \$60 million worth of cuts and laying out the details for each of those so that we can evaluate them. That transparency really helps ensure we're sunsetting any programs that are outdated or positions not needed and right-sizing things to manage taxpayer money wisely.

[03:46:42] But some of the proposals, like the one that I mentioned earlier, would harm essential services. We're not just trimming fat and waste. We're getting into some of the meat and the bone of services that the county really can and should provide. Now, look, there's valid concerns about the growing property tax burden.

[03:47:00] I understand that. I am a currently unemployed homeowner. So I'm very aware of the pain that an increase in the property tax rate imposes. So I do ask that you minimize or eliminate the property tax increase to the extent possible.

[03:47:16] And I appreciate the efforts to diversify the revenue through the meals tax and various other measures that are being taken. But where necessary, even in my situation, I'm willing to pay a little bit more now to help preserve those services that make Fairfax a strong, inclusive, and thriving community.

[03:47:36] One last note, I would urge better coordination between the board and FCPS in the future to avoid the budget disconnects like the one that we had this year. I want to play the blame game. I just want to focus on improving that in the future. And I do hope that we can find a way to give our teachers a raise.

[03:47:54] I think they deserve one. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is, do we have Sharon Heyman here? Sharon Heyman. How about David Jacobstein? David Jacobstein. Max Siegel.

[03:48:15] Keith Elliott. Come on down, Keith. Yisha Mehta. Yisha Mehta. and Atiyah Mazabian. If I called your name, please come on down close to testify.

[03:48:32] We are on speaker number six, Keith Elliott. Good evening, members of the board. Thank you for your time. I know this process last three days has got to be grueling, and I do appreciate your service and what you're doing here for the county. There's a lot of people who have difference of opinions and things like that, but I think that's all part of due process, right?

[03:48:53] So I do appreciate your time sitting here and listening to all the different things and special prayers for you, Pat, for what you're going through and stuff like that. So at any rate, I'm here to speak primarily about the real estate budget, right, the property taxes. My taxes in 2017 were \$4,100, and with the increase that I got in the mail today, the tax on my house will be \$8,100.

[03:49:19] So essentially it's doubled in seven years, and that gets hard to pay, and I get it. You've heard a lot of people here that got a lot of programs that you've got to cut back, and it's hard i get it it's going to be hard for every single one of you guys to try to determine who gets cut and what doesn't get cut but i do think the one way you can determine it is to look at an on anomalies in the budget look at the different things what's what's spiking what's not spiking but the only way you can find what's spiking the things that you could try to save money on is to look at the spending and the only way to look at the spending is to get a group you heard

[03:49:55] a lady about the parks and recreation use her services for input you've got members of the county that are auditors i'm sure ceos cfos and everything else right use services of county people form a panel that can review the budget for you guys right and i know it's you guys can't look at every single line item but if you get a panel together they can look at it and it's it's hard I understand it, but something's got to be cut back.

[03:50:23] You can't just look at real estate property taxes. I get you're looking at the meals tax. I'm against the meals tax, but, hey, that's going to be peanuts on every time I go. But when my taxes go up \$4,000 over seven years, it's a different topic. You know, and about the spending to get the panel pointed, if a Democratic board 20 years ago could do it, why can't this Democratic board do it now?

[03:50:46] I just don't get it. It seems like there's a lot of Democrats and Republicans all the way around that want to say, where's our spending? Where's it all going to? And I think we've got to look at it. Federal government's doing it. A lot of people don't like it or anything else like that, but they're doing it. And I think it's important to try to do it.

[03:51:03] You know, Supervisor Herity wants to try to do it. I think somebody else on the board should second it and at least have a conversation, right? What's the benefit of it? What could be done with it? Is there a right way to try to get a panel together to try to review the expenses?

[03:51:20] You know, Mr. Walkinshaw, my brother is Richard Elliott. He speaks highly of you for the war memorial at Howard Field, right? So, I mean, speaks highly of you. Supervisor Alcorn, good friend of mine, Alan Shishler, speaks highly of you, too, through the – he's a colleague of mine and stuff.

[03:51:39] So, you guys, let's all try to work together. I mean, we're on the opposite side of the table, but the benefit is to look and see what we're cutting back. And these other programs may not need to be cut back, and maybe the teachers can get the salaries by trying to keep the money within the building versus all the money and salaries and everything outside the buildings, the schools.

[03:51:59] Thank you guys very much. Good luck with what you've got to do. It's going to be painful. Thank you. I appreciate that. Speaker number seven is Yesha Mehta here. Yesha Mehta. How about Atiyah Mazabin? Ah, okay.

[03:52:16] Come on down.

[03:52:26] Yeah, you can pull that down. There you go. Hello, everybody. My name's Yesha. I'm 60s old, and I'm going to presentate why I like my school and the teachers inside it.

[03:52:44] I like my teachers because they help me work. But why do we have to work? We have to work because if we don't work when we grow up, we won't earn any money.

[03:53:02] And if we don't earn any money, we won't get food, dishes, or a home. And teachers, we need the teachers to help us learn better.

[03:53:21] And sometimes when you see a tired teacher, you might not like it. But in the school, there is crazy kids, there is kids that roam around and never stay still, there are funny kids, and more.

[03:53:44] And the teacher has to take care of it, all of them, by themselves. And you can't, like, compare when the teacher and all the kids are on the carpet, but you're the only one that's doing your computer.

[03:54:08] Even if she said, no, you can't, just come back that, hey, I need to do this. You don't have to complain. If the teacher said no already, you have to listen to them. And we need a school, and I like my school because we need a school because if we don't have a school, we can't, like, there's no school.

[03:54:39] We don't know what school to go to. And even if we were a first grader, we might go to, like, Hunter Woods or any or a different school.

[03:54:59] Or if you were a tenth grader, we might go to Rafe as well because we're no school. So there's so many grasslands, so we don't know which one to go to. Thank you. Thank you.

[03:55:16] Thank you very much for that.

[03:55:42] brought down the house so well done well done very very proud of you um let me ask uh i'm going to read a couple more names and see if any of these folks are here atia uh mazamin is that you okay excellent money or whatever else because the teachers we don't want them to leave or retire

[03:56:15] so we want so we want to get money or whatever so the teachers will stay Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. A tough act to follow, but we are on speaker number eight. Welcome. Okay. I don't know whether you guys are ready to hear me now after her. Good evening. My name is Atiyah Mahzabeen. I have been a resident of

[03:56:51] Fairfax County for 29 years. For the past 13 years, I have proudly served as the Assistant Director of the Fairfax County Employees Child Care Center. I hold a master's degree in early childhood education from the George Mason University. I served as a classroom reader, evaluator, and for child care centers. As you have heard, we provided exceptional and professional services at ECCC. Our teachers demonstrate immense dedication, passion, and commitment to creating an excellent environment for our children and families.

[03:57:32] We are a model center for Fairfax County, consistently achieving high scores in the classroom assessment scoring system. I would like to reflect the story from The Great Kepok Tree, a tale of Amazon rainforest, about a man who exhausts himself trying to cut, chop down a giant Kepok tree.

[03:57:54] While he is asleep, all the living creatures from the tree whisper in his ear about the importance of the tree, how all living things depend on one another. And the man listening to them walked away without cutting the tree.

[03:58:10] Over the past 37 years, the ECC has grown as a tree to serve children and their families. Please do not cut it down. I urge you to support the ECCC as we are ready to collaborate and develop innovative ideas to ensure its financial sustainability.

[03:58:35] As Chairman Jeff McCann mentioned on the first day, this is Fairfax County, we can do better. At ECC, we are committed to working alongside you to be part of the solution and continue thriving in the years to come.

[03:58:53] Please allow us to demonstrate that we can survive and sustain in the rainy days. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. So I'm going to call the remaining couple in-person speakers, and then we're going to go to the block that has arrived that we called earlier.

[03:59:15] But let me first see, I know Emily Miller is here. So Emily, if you can come on down, you are speaker number nine. But let me ask after Emily, have any of the following people come back in to speak? Max Siegel, Sharon Heyman, or David Jacobstein?

[03:59:36] Okay, so we are going to go to, this is, come on over Emily, we are on speaker number nine, Emily Miller. Welcome. I think most of you know my name. I'm Senator Emily Miller, and I've lived in the county since 1964.

[03:59:59] It's probably before many of you were even born. And I'm here today as a senior citizen living in Fairfax County to say that our property taxes are rising every year and along now with meal taxes.

[04:00:22] And it's a tax burden that is very hard on many on fixed incomes. Seniors are struggling to stay in this county, and we need another source of revenue for tax increases.

[04:00:42] The majority of our taxes come from our real estate, but we have many office buildings throughout the county that are sitting empty and don't pay a penny in taxes and have not since COVID.

[04:00:59] It is clear that we have to have new tax revenue sources, but our first option can't be that families going out to the grocery store or to dinner.

[04:01:18] When I think about solutions, I'm thinking what many of you are thinking but are afraid to say. A high-end casino in Tyson's Corner would solve one of these problems.

[04:01:40] Having tourism in Fairfax County means county residents are not having to pay the tax, full tax, for the services.

[04:01:55] We must have attractions to bring people in, and a lot of very wealthy, wealthy travelers arrive in Dulles Airport internationally every day, drive through Fairfax County, not leaving any money, and then going on to Washington, D.C.

[04:02:17] If we can bring these people in to spend their money in Fairfax, it would go a long way to relieving many financial needs for our Fairfax residents.

[04:02:36] Other localities have built casinos, pulled in hundreds of millions of tax dollars in tax revenue. Prince George's County, which many of you know, has funded their county budget right now because of MGM.

[04:03:02] And a lot of that money is from Fairfax County residents. So we need this money to stay in Fairfax. Members of the board, I've sat through what you're doing, and I know what a burden it is.

[04:03:19] And the decisions are very tough to make. So I want to say that you must think about solutions like a casino and a conference center.

[04:03:35] This would really take away the burden from many of the property owners, and I'm a property owner in Fairfax County. I know for years the board has always talked about revenue, reclassification, diversification.

[04:04:01] Now is your chance. and our seniors would be able to afford to stay in the county and maybe the young people would have a place that they would enjoy going to at night as well. Thank you for your time and your attention.

[04:04:19] Thank you. Thank you, Emily. I am now going to go to a block of folks that we skipped over earlier. Some, I understand, need translator services, and so if that's the case, we will just indicate that. is Marianela Funes here, to be followed by Corinne Crowsdale, Beatrice Parada, and Morgan Green.

[04:04:49] If I called your name, please come on down close. We will be hearing from speaker number 43 on the original speakers list, which is Marianela Funes. Welcome. Thank you, Chairman.

[04:05:06] Well, my name is Marianela Funes, and I am a community organizer with Tenants and Workers United. and you're good okay and we have been organization have been in the city of Alexandria for over 40 years and we are here with our community we're low-income community and also with our sister organization the new Virginia majority and we we work directly with classes families of color to deepen civic engagement and win changes changes that will improve the quality of life for our communities

[04:05:48] fairfax county is characterized there by islands of disadvantage amid affluent communities with especially sharp divide between homeowners and renters 44.2 percent of fairfax county renters are cost-borne spending over 30 percent of their income on rent and 20.9 percent are severely cost-borne spending over 50 percent of their income on rent a fairfax county household will

[04:06:22] need to earn eighty one hundred eight thousand eighty one thousand eight hundred this year to afford a two-bedroom apartment a fair market rent yet 44.9 percent of those who rent in the county over 48 000 households are less than that even working class household with two full-time jobs incomes are often unable to afford rent in the county this includes workers in essential

[04:06:55] occupations like retail sales restaurant work housekeeping child care and home health care the urgency of fairfax county's house housing affordability crisis will only grow in the coming years the county's 2018 community-wide housing strategic plan forecasted a growth of 4591 households below 30 of the media income and 8 443 households between 30 and 50 percent of the media

[04:07:35] income by 2032 it is time that our country country leaders take action to help those most in need and i am here along with the with the members of our community to ask you to include the following in the 2026 budget we would like you to increase the tax meal to four percent also we would like 14 millions for a local housing voucher program and part of this we want that

[04:08:12] part of this increase of tax meal go to this program also please do not forget our communities you already know that you have many communities in discounted mobile home communities please don't forget then we I know you already signed up some you already allocate some money for for the mobile home for the pilot program in Harmony Place, but the community still don't see anything yet. So we please you to take in consideration our demands. Thank you so much for listening.

[04:08:48] Thank you. Speaker number 44 is Karen Crowsdale. Karen. Good evening Chairman McKay and supervisors. My name is Karen Crowsdale. I've lived in Fairfax County in the Penn Don mobile home park since my adolescence with both my mother my stepfather and my pet it has been our home since then the sense of housing

[04:09:27] instability I experienced before settling down in Penn Don was very stressful it was difficult to live with the fear of the rug being pulled under our feet my family and I represent the reality of many low-income working-class families every year we experience rent increases and it is devastating Even if both my parents have a full-time job and myself included, many times we struggle to pay the rent and other basic necessities.

[04:09:53] It is a sad reality that many renters face housing insecurity because of high costs and bills and rent increases. Sometimes we are unable to get the full amount to pay our rent, and even owing landlords \$200 can mean being taken to court.

[04:10:09] When we look for advisory support from legal services, we may not qualify for the help. We want to live here. We have been living here in our homes for decades, and we deserve to live here and have an opportunity to stay in the county. I am here representing the renters that are cost-burdened, the working-class and low-income families.

[04:10:31] We urge you to allocate funds to set the meals tax at the top rate of 4%, to allocate \$14 million for a local housing voucher program to support cost-burdened working-class families who are struggling to pay rent, and to continue investing in improving the conditions of the mobile home communities in the county.

[04:10:53] Please consider this testimony and take in consideration our recommendations. Thank you so much. Thank you very much. Our next speaker is Beatrice Parada. Buenas tardes, señores supervisores.

[04:11:13] Que la paz de Dios esté sobre todos vosotros. Mi nombre es Beatriz del Carmen Parada. Soy de la comunidad Harmony Play. Vivo ahí por muchos años y con toda mi familia también.

[04:11:35] Soy miembro de Inquilinos y Trabajadores Unidos. Les doy gracias por darnos oportunidad de hablar esta noche y por todos los esfuerzos que han hecho Para apoyar a nuestra comunidad,

especialmente al supervisor Lars, porque él siempre nos ha acompañado, nos ha visitado nuestra comunidad.

[04:12:12] Pero sabemos que hay mucho más por hacer. Necesitamos que todos ustedes se comprometan a mejorar la comunidad, condiciones de vida de nuestras comunidades.

[04:12:30] Los residentes de casas móviles reconocemos que ha habido algunos esfuerzos positivos en nuestra comunidad, como por ejemplo el programa de aires acondicionados para protegernos del cambio climático.

[04:12:53] la creación de la mesa redonda y la instalación de alarmas contra los incendios. Sin embargo, a pesar de conversaciones y reuniones con algunos de ustedes, no hemos tenido cambios profundos para mejorar la calidad de vida.

[04:13:19] Nuestra comunidad sigue en peligro de desplazamiento por los altos costos de la renta. Esto es muy triste y duro para nosotros, que nos toca tener dos trabajos y aún así decidir si compramos comida o vamos al doctor o pagamos la renta.

[04:13:48] Han pasado más de dos años desde que se nos prometió empezar el programa de reparación de viviendas y no hemos visto nada hasta el momento.

[04:14:04] Somos conocedores de todo, estamos siendo impactados por los cambios administrativos, los recortes de empleos.

[04:14:19] pero es necesario que no olviden las comunidades como las nuestras. También queremos vivir en Ferfas y merecemos una oportunidad de crecer nuestras familias aquí.

[04:14:43] Establecer el impuesto sobre las comidas en la tasa máxima del 4%, Asignar 14 millones para un programa local de vales de vivienda para apoyar a la familia de clase trabajadora.

[04:15:11] Continuar invirtiendo y mejorando las condiciones de las comunidades de casas móviles. Esperamos que nuestras peticiones no se las lleve el viento y sean tomadas en cuenta.

[04:15:35] Muchas gracias por escucharlos. Thank you. I'll read her translated speech. My name is Beatriz Parada. I am from the Harmony Place mobile home community.

[04:15:52] 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 you all for the efforts you have done to support our communities, especially to Supervisor Lusk, because he has always joined us and visited our community.

[04:16:12] But there is still so much to do. We need all of you to commit to improving the living conditions of our community. The residents of Harmony Place recognize that there have been some positive changes in our community such as the air conditioning program the creation of the round table and the fire safety alarm installation 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 high rent costs in december 2024 we received another letter of

[04:16:47] rent increase. 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 has been a couple years since we were promised that our home repair program will start in our community, and we haven't seen anything yet.

[04:17:06] We also feel the negative impact that the entire development project of Route 1 and BARC has had. We feel that we are not taken into consideration when deciding on these developments that have negative impacts on our community.

[04:17:22] We are aware that we are all being impacted by administrative changes, job cuts, but it is necessary that communities like ours do not forget that we are also directly impacted because we are the working class with very low wages.

[04:17:38] We want to live in Fairfax too. We are working class, and we deserve an opportunity to grow our families here. We ask you to please dedicate the following in the 2026 budget, to set the meals tax at the top rate of 4%, to allocate \$14 million for our local housing voucher program to support cost-burdened working-class families who are struggling to pay the rent, to continue investing in improving the conditions of mobile home communities, and we hope that our respects are not brushed, our requests are not brushed off and taken into consideration.

[04:18:12] Thank you very much for listening to us. Thank you. We are now on speaker number 47, Joseph Zikolov, to be followed by Eva Valiz and Admaro Aguirre, in that order.

[04:18:35] Welcome. Thank you, Chairman McKay, members of the Board of Supervisors. Good evening. My name is Yosef Hezekilov, and I'm a community organizer for New Virginia Majority. Over the last several months, along with our partners at Tenants and Workers United, I've had the pleasure of meeting with most of you to talk about our proposal for a \$14 million rental voucher program.

[04:18:59] We've received some positive responses from some of you and not-so-positive responses from others. In almost every meeting we've had, we've heard some of the same common refrains, though. This will be a tough year for that. We have a deficit. This is not the right time.

[04:19:14] As an organization dedicated to building power in working class communities, we know better than most that this is a tough time because we hear it from members almost every day. Many more of our members, you see a bunch of them out here, but many more wanted to be here, but could not because they're too busy working the jobs that support and are the backbone of the economy of this county.

[04:19:43] Many are busy doing the work that is vital to this county, but that few others want to do. They're busy building our houses. They're busy cleaning our houses and our streets. They're busy making our food, et cetera. And many others wanted to come here today to tell you how hard it is to keep a roof over their heads.

[04:20:08] But ironically, they couldn't because they were too busy working so they can keep the roof over their heads. Right. One of our members, Ana. She had to back out the last minute because her high school age son now has to go to work and start a job to help support the family.

[04:20:26] And she had to take him to an interview at a restaurant. Another, Maria, she just got off a 12 hour shift and now has to go and take care of her grandson while her son works all night. One of our other members, Patty, is actually too sick to come.

[04:20:42] She tells me that at the start of every month, she has to decide whether she should pay her rent or pay for her medication. So believe me when I tell you, we know what a tough year this is. We wouldn't be here, okay, if this wasn't a tough year.

[04:21:00] This county's financial difficulties pale in comparison to the difficulties faced by the working class and the immigrants that make this county the great county that it is. And not finding the means to invest in the well-being of our working class would not only be disappointing, but frankly, it would be a dereliction of your duty as elected officials.

[04:21:22] So I hope you all find a way to do the right thing. Let's work together and invest in solutions to help our most vulnerable community members maintain a roof over their heads. Thank you. Thank you. Is this Eva Belize?

[04:21:42] Welcome.

[04:21:51] Buenas noches, Supervisores del Condado de Ferfas. Mi nombre es Eva Belize. Soy líder comunitaria de la Nueva Mayoría de Virginia y también soy residente de Herdo. Estoy muy involucrada en mi comunidad y de hecho muchas acciones para apoyar a esta gente tan vulnerable.

[04:22:11] Por eso tengo un punto de vista muy claro sobre las necesidades más importantes del condado.

[04:22:34] concerns of the people that are in this situation and I'd like to represent them tonight.

[04:23:07] dos o tres trabajos, cada uno para mantener sus techos sobre la cabeza de sus hijos. Y con todo el tiempo fuera de la casa, ellos no pueden darle el cariño y la atención que se merecen sus hijos, y sus hijos sufren diversas maneras como resultado.

[04:23:25] Yeah, the community, our community has a lot of difficulties, but most important amongst those difficulties is the idea of hanging on to their own houses. A lot of members of community end up paying most of their checks just to pay the rent. And sometimes charges will come up that they hadn't anticipated in their budgeting. And during these moments they have to find a way of covering these bills and at the same time providing their children with the attention that they need. And there's been a lot of different situations as a result of this.

[04:24:04] Los programas que existen para abordar este problema no son suficientes. Por eso solicito a ustedes la aprobación de 14 millones de dólares por el presupuesto para programas de vales de vivienda y asistencia de la renta. Muchas gracias.

[04:24:20] Okay, because of these difficulties, we need more help, and that's why we are appealing to you to approve \$14 million in budgetary programs and housing vouchers and other forms of assistance.

[04:24:37] Thank you. Thank you. Can you introduce your son to us? Is he your son? Oh, si. Buenas noches. Él quiere pedirles algo. Le voy a bajar el micrófono. Okay, good evening, yes, he would like to turn the microphone over to him.

[04:24:56] He has a request he'd like to make it here. Okay. Él es mi hijo, Juan Ángel Serrano. He's my son, Juan Ángel Serrano. Hola, me llamo Ángel Serrano Belli.

[04:25:18] Hi, good evening, and my name is Ángel Serrano Belli. Hola a todos. I greet all. Toda tu renta está cara. The rent is pretty high. Queremos casa para todos.

[04:25:36] Queremos casa de casa para todos en el mundo. Yeah, this is a problem for the entire world. Muchas gracias.

[04:25:52] Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Admaro Aguirre. This is Speaker 49, Admaro Aguirre.

[04:26:10] Welcome. Buenas noches. Omaro no se hizo presente, pero yo voy a hablar a nombre de la nueva mayoría de Virginia. Good evening, supervisors of Fairfax County. My name is Rosario. As I said, I am a community leader in Virginia.

[04:26:28] Today, many families of the class of our city have difficulties to pay the increased cost of alquiler. 44% of inquilinos in this county pay more than 30% of their income for rent, and more than 20% pay more than 50% 48,000 hogares no ganan suficiente dinero para la renta de un apartamento de dos cuartos.

[04:27:21] They have a hard time paying their rent. According to the rising cost of rent, 44% of them, of the residents, pay more than 20%. No, no, no. 20% of the residents pay more than 50% for rent. 48,000 households don't make enough money to pay the rent, their apartment rents.

[04:27:45] La mayoría de hogares que tienen dificultades pagando la renta son familias de color y de los datos muestran que las familias hispanas son las más propensas a sufrir una carga económica excesiva de viviendas.

[04:28:01] Demasiadas familias hispanas se ven obligadas a recortar gastos esenciales como educación, cuidado infantil, atención médica y nutrición para poder conservar su vivienda. El alto costo del alquiler limita las oportunidades económicas de muchas familias inmigrantes y las atrapa en un ciclo de pobreza.

[04:28:47] families find themselves obligated to cut costs, essential costs such as education, child care and medical attention and nutrition in order to pay for their housing. The high cost of rent limits the economic opportunities of many families of immigrants that are trapped in a cycle of poverty.

[04:29:11] Los programas recientes no son suficientes para los residentes del condado más vulnerables. the majority of the poorest residents do not qualify for affordable housing. The federal support programs do not cover many of the immigrant community.

[04:29:51] Federal support do not cover much of the cost of the immigration, immigrant community. Necesitamos soluciones alternativas que son dirigidas específicamente para la clase trabajadora.

[04:30:07] Es por eso que proponemos un programa de 14 millones de vales de vivienda y asistencia de renta. Muchas gracias por su atención. Okay. We need to have some alternative programs that are helping specifically the working class.

[04:30:24] And that's why we're asking for an approval of \$14 million for housing vouchers and assistance and rent assistance. Thank you. Thank you. Do we have Speaker 50 here, Jose Antonio Pardo?

[04:30:43] Welcome. Buenas noches. Mi nombre es Jose Antonio Pardo. Good evening, my name is Jose Antonio Pardo. Y vivo en Herndon. Ahora no tengo actualmente trabajo.

[04:31:01] I live in Herndon. I don't have work at the moment. Y por eso no puedo alquilar mi propio apartamento. And that's why I can't rent my own apartment. Desafortunadamente, necesito alquilar un cuarto y una casa. Unfortunately, I have to rent a room and a house. Esa situación, lamentablemente, es insostenible cada día, cada mes que pasa.

[04:31:23] No tengo privacidad, ni mi propio espacio privado. La casa no es muy limpia. No tengo el derecho a usar el laundry.

[04:31:50] No tengo espacio suficiente para poder guardar alimentos fríos. drinks of that sort. The owners of the house have got all the space of the refrigerator occupied.

[04:32:11] My situation is not unique in Fairfax. There's a lot of people in this county that are living as similar to how I'm living. For many people of the working class The majority of their pay goes to rent.

[04:32:37] Yeah, para los demás cargos, para alimentos, gasolina, seguro, teléfono, etc., no alcanza lo que uno gana. So for the remaining expenses such as gasoline, nutrition, insurance, telephone, etc., there's no money left for that.

[04:33:01] Es por eso que yo considero importante que este condado invierta en programa para nosotros como la clase trabajadora. That's why I think it's important for the county to invest in programs for us, the working class. Por eso solicito a ustedes la aprobación de 14 millones de dólares de presupuesto para programas de vales de vivienda y asistencia de la renta.

[04:33:26] That's why I would propose to you, the County of Fairfax, to approve \$14 million of budget allotted to the programs of housing vouchers and help with rent. Thank you.

[04:33:42] Muchas gracias. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you all very much. At this time, I'm going to go back to the add-on speakers list that I've been calling names off of.

[04:33:57] We have a number of people who have indicated that they would like to call in. do we have Noor Parsons on the line? Can you hear me okay? Yeah, hello? Yes, welcome. The floor is yours. Okay. Hi, I am Noor Parsons, a seventh grader at the Roe Middle School. I believe afterschool programs should not be canceled. When I go to afterschool, I get one-on-one support from my teachers that I wouldn't be able to get during class. I also participate in the Math Counts Club, which combines hanging out with like-minded people and learning math. Please fund our

[04:34:34] after-school programs. They matter. Thank you very much. I'm also going to read a statement from my friend at Kilmer Middle School who was unable to make it today and asked me to share this message. Hi, my name is Megan Lamb. I'm a seventh grader at Kilmer Middle School. I participate in after-school activities such as cross-town kicks and cross-country running. I do not think after school activities should be canceled. The athletic programs offer to help me to stay healthy, improve my communication skills, and I get to see my friends. These

[04:35:13] opportunities should be available to everyone, which is why after school activities should not be canceled. Thank you. Thank you. Do we have speaker 11, Christopher? We were unable to reach speaker 11, but we have speaker 12. Speaker 12. Avish Patel, can you hear me? Yeah. Welcome. The floor is yours. All right. Hello, everyone. Good evening. And thank you to all the county officials and also border supporters for giving me this opportunity. And also to all the border supporters, I can see your commitment to make this country better. You guys are still here

[04:35:53] at this hour and trying to listen to all your residents. So thank you so much for everything that you guys are doing. And yes, my name is Avis Patel. I'm a proud Perfect County resident since 2008. I am also a self-made businessman and a true believer that Fairfax County is the best county. But in recent years, that has started to change and our county has started to go off track. As of last year, I paid Fairfax County at least half a million dollars in tax revenues via sales tax, commercial

[04:36:27] real estate tax, BPOL, tax on cars, home real estate tax, personal property tax, and so on, etc. But my personal income on my tax return was really less than that. I made a lot less money than what I gave to Pepex County. And that is already burdensome. Voters have rejected food tax, not just once, but twice. And now, if you bring this tax onto the voters without their consent, then it will look bad onto all of the Board of Supporters in front of their constituents.

[04:37:05] Any more tax increase will be a breaking point. You have to strictly, you should be strictly looking at cutting waste pool spending instead of increasing taxes on residents. I was there yesterday at the board auditorium listening to all the testimonies.

[04:37:24] And majority of the people that showed up and gave testimonies were either from nonprofit organizations or perfect county funded programs and agencies and departments that runs on county's funding. They, of course, want you to increase the taxes so that they can continue getting funds and keep their paychecks running.

[04:37:46] Also, many of these organizations are actually doing good things. But then, compared to those good organizations, there are many organizations and programs that are doing little to none to benefit the actual residents that are in need.

[04:38:03] Unfortunately, many organizations are operated as paycheck printers by the employees of such organizations. Even FCPS is using these kids right now to give testimonies over here instead of cutting their own wasteful spending.

[04:38:20] And yes, my kids also go to FCPS. And the quality of education that they are providing now is far less than what it used to be before, literally even a few years ago. Daddy, look at me! Yep, that's my thought. on two minutes two minutes baby and here here is the actual financial statement data of one of this organization meant to help homeless in 2023 this non-profit received 16 million dollars via

[04:38:56] mostly government grants and then donations and other income out of that 16 million dollars they had payroll expense of eight million dollars this is actual pnl data from their own website They used 50% of the money as payroll expense.

[04:39:17] On top of that, one of the expense items was named as cash help expense, which was over a million dollars. That cash help expense name itself is a big red flag. If I have that expense line item in my business, of course, IRS will definitely, and also even Fairfax County or state of Virginia, will definitely be auditing me.

[04:39:38] Thank you, Mr. Vittell. Thank you for your testimony. Well, there is other things that I would like to mention. Yeah, your time expired a while ago, so I've got to move on to the next speaker, but you're welcome to email in or send in the remainder of what you wanted to share with us.

[04:39:56] Do we have Speaker 13 on the line? Ann Wade, can you hear me okay? Yes, sir. Can you guys hear me okay? We can. Welcome. The floor is yours. Okay, thank you. First of all, thank you all for allowing us the opportunity to voice our concerns and our opinions and our requests.

[04:40:17] And thank you for staying past your normal office hours. First of all, I'd like to go through a very general quick review of our county's financial position. In 2024, there was a \$240 million surplus.

[04:40:36] And this year, there is projected a \$300 million shortfall. Where did all that money go? According to several media sources, some of the causes, major and minor, are a COVID-inspired

memorial, a salary increase for county employees, a government car for Chairman McKay, collective bargaining, administrative expenses, a legal defense fund, and that's all in that category.

[04:41:10] Now, via media articles, we've been urged by one or two county supervisors to express how these taxes and proposed tax increases are impacting our families.

[04:41:27] I would like to cite one probably enduring concern of a family separate from our own, and that is a teacher who testified at last year's budget hearings while she was holding her infant child that she is not questioning whether she's going to be able to continue to live in Fairfax County, let alone expand her family.

[04:41:52] And then how the tax increases have impacted and will undoubtedly further impact our family. We've had to liquidate some of our inheritance going back two or three generations, our investments and our savings just to pay our real estate taxes, which for us increased more than 12% over the past year alone.

[04:42:23] A couple of years ago, the reputed tax increase averaged 6.7%. Ours was 8% then. That year, in response to our question as to why the taxes keep going up, a supervisor said that, quote-unquote, Fairfax County is expanding and we have to provide certain services.

[04:42:50] Okay, we can understand that because we take advantage of a lot of these services. However, at that time, the federal government and many of our family and friends across the country and across this county were tightening our belts.

[04:43:08] We did not see any indication of the county doing the same or proposing to do the same. Further, we have forgone buying necessities that we should have bought one to two years ago. And as a comparatively minor example, we have forgone buying eyeglasses because we were concerned about paying our expenses.

[04:43:32] Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Your time did expire a while ago, but thank you for your testimony. Do we have Speaker 14 on the line? Diana Mertz, can you hear me? Yes, I can. Can you hear me?

[04:43:50] We can. Welcome. The floor is yours. Wonderful. Thank you for your help and your time today. I wanted to briefly provide some testimony around funding for a project at the corner of Seaclip and Great Falls Road over in McLean. I've met with Supervisor Beerman and spoken to his office many times, as well as my elected school board official representatives, about this intersection.

[04:44:13] This intersection is our only crosswalk from our neighborhood to McLean High School, and transportation is not provided for our neighborhood due to the close proximity of this intersection. Specifically we are looking for funding, this project has been approved as a safe route to school through VDOT's evaluation of the intersection.

[04:44:35] However, our crosswalk is not very visible at all right now. It is the only crosswalk on Great Falls from our neighborhood to cross the street. And so we are looking specifically at that \$100 million that is slated to potentially address pedestrian safety projects to fund this project.

[04:44:54] We have many students that cross this road daily, that intersection, that crosswalk is frankly ignored by drivers. We have testimony and neighborhood signatures from many, many neighbors that support this project that have had close calls.

[04:45:10] While crossing the street, trying to get to work into schools, and so I wanted to draw attention to the specific intersection at the corner of Seaclip and Great Falls. the crosswalk and where our focus is providing a safe voucher pool for our high school students that are crossing this intersection and i'm happy to provide any additional documentation but looking at that 100 million dollars that's slated for pedestrian and transportation safety projects to fund this small project thank you very much thank you appreciate do we have speaker 15

[04:45:44] heather carey heather carey can you hear me okay yes i can hear you welcome thank you um Thank you for your time tonight. I wanted to speak on the behalf of the Employees Child Care Center. I don't really have anything written down, so I'm just going to go rogue here from the heart.

[04:46:04] I did want to speak because I have been with the Employees Child Care Center for 25 years. I started in September of 2000, right out of high school. I didn't care about the job because The county runs deep within my family.

[04:46:20] My mom has been with the county, had been with the county since 1978, started at the Massey Building, RIP, Massey Building, working for the public works and clerked to the board herself before moving to the Herity Building in 1988 to work for the Department of Transportation.

[04:46:43] She told me about the job over at the Employee's Child Care Center. I was like, okay, sure, I'll give it a try. She encouraged me because she said Fairfax County was a great place to work. So I said, let's do it. And I started, and this has been a home to me.

[04:47:01] This has been my life. I have literally grown up at the Employee's Child Care Center from an 18-year-old to do the math, 25 years. I've had a daughter who's attended the Employee's Child Care Center. She's about to graduate high school.

[04:47:18] It is great memories for her, myself. I just wanted to tell you how great our center is, how important it is that the education that we're giving the children is not just about ABCs and 1, 2, 3s.

[04:47:35] It's about social, emotional, about critical thinking, problem solving, so that we can send the children out into the world so that they can resolve their problems using words and talking through. instead of feeling that they need to bring violence into schools because they don't know how to articulate what they want to say.

[04:47:56] I know that there is another daycare being built across the street from us. I don't know if that is any connection to why we're proposed to be shut or not, but I do want to say that our center is completely different from that center.

[04:48:12] That's a subsidy daycare for the employees. I don't see why we couldn't work together, that both of the daycares could bring you money. I think that they're both beneficial for the county and mostly for children.

[04:48:30] Children are so very important, and they need this education. The early years are the best years of your life. As you know, as we get older, times get hard. If it gets rough, we get tired. Children should be able to enjoy the beginning of their life and have the best care possible.

[04:48:47] And I know that we can give that to them. um i just thank you for your time and i appreciate everything you're doing and staying late for us thank you thank you i'm on speaker number 16 rachel bogner can you hear me yes i can thank you very much just well let me put on my reading glasses please

okay um is it all right if i start now yes please okay thank you very much good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak I'd like to start with the bottom line.

[04:49:23] In order to continue to be a vibrant community, in order to draw young families and be attractive for experienced and educated parents and workers, as well as to serve current residents, we need to provide quality education and quality services for families.

[04:49:40] And I'm going to say ECCC, Employee's Child Care Center, makes it happen in early childhood. It's a fact of life that for most families, both parents need to work outside the home. Parents need a place they know and can trust. Nobody needs a place where they're thinking all day long, is my child okay?

[04:50:00] My husband and I went through the same type of surgery, and I was pregnant with my children. And we looked around at several places until we found one where we were comfortable. When I was pregnant with my second child, we decided to try to find a less expensive facility. That was a huge mistake.

[04:50:17] We were only there for a month because my child was unhappy, and thus we were unhappy. We went back to the place where we knew and trusted. Now, my son and daughter-in-law are using Employees Child Care Center and are very happy there. My grandson is very happy there.

[04:50:34] I visited the facility, and I spent the morning there one time, and I could clearly see the bond between the children and those who were looking after them. I could easily and quickly see that the children were being well taken care of physically, emotionally, and socially.

[04:50:51] Just like the previous speaker said, they were having fun, laughing, taking part. My daughter-in-law researched several daycare facilities and accepted her job in Fairfax County in large part because of the wonderful faculty and facility at ECCC.

[04:51:10] But Employee Childhood Center is way more than just a daycare facility. From a practical matter, it's a magnet for people who want to work in Fairfax County and also a way to retain those quality employees, and that benefits everybody in Fairfax County.

[04:51:27] As a grandparent, I want the same thing for my grandchild and everybody in his generation as I did for my own children at that age, and that thing is a quality start. Society owes it to and greatly benefits from providing that to the next generation.

[04:51:44] Wonderful daycare and early education facilities are not cookie-cutter objects. They're planned with love and forethought, and they're operated with that same forethought and love and dedication. And Employee Child Care Center is that high-quality facility.

[04:52:02] I implore you to leave it the way it is and not turn it over to someone or something else. And I thank you for your time. Thank you. Our next speaker is Claire Hurley. Claire Hurley elected not to speak, but we did skip over Heather Carey, who we have on the phone.

[04:52:20] Number 15. Oh, okay. Very good. Number 15. Ms. Carey, can you hear me? Yes. Hi. Welcome. Thank you. I was on before, but I guess I got cut off. So, okay, I'll just talk for another minute. Okay.

[04:52:36] So, I'm representing the Employees Child Care Center. We also have many budget ideas that we would love to share with whoever would be willing to listen. Even if you give us three years to show that we can save money, two years, one year, I know we can do it.

[04:52:53] We have so many people who are thinking up of brilliant ideas to be cost-efficient to save you money so that we can continue to give the care to the families and the children that we serve. And I don't know. That's it.

[04:53:10] Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you. Okay. Bye. I do have an in-person speaker who signed up, Jennifer Smith. If you could come on down, please. And is there anyone else present who has not already spoken that would like to speak? Okay? If you can come on down and sign in with the clerk.

[04:53:35] Welcome. Thank you. Members of the board, excuse me. Members of the board, first I would like to thank you for taking the time to listen to me today. My name is Jennifer Smith, and I'm a former client of New Generations. Because of New Generations, I'm a productive member of society.

[04:53:54] Because of New Generations, I am sober today. Because of New Generations, I have sole custody of my son. New Generations introduced me to EMDR and taught me how to deal with my complex PTSD, which I was diagnosed with after experiencing both physical and sexual abuse.

[04:54:14] I would like to read to you two short letters from a former client and her child who was two when she went to New Generations and is now 12. To whom it may concern, I'm writing because I'm very concerned about the possibility of New Generation program being closed down. This is an indispensable program that offers a unique process to heal the whole woman.

[04:54:34] This program allows women to receive treatment in an all-female small setting. This program is unlike many other programs in that they specialize in the treatment of women with dual diagnoses, providing a safe place for women and their children to stay while the mother receives treatment.

[04:54:51] This small all-female setting is a paramount because so many of the issues women face while trying to recover from addiction, such as abuse or a history of trauma, that can sabotage a woman's success in a co-ed setting. When I tell you these things, I'm not just repeating what I have heard.

[04:55:08] I'm telling you what I have lived. Without this program, I do not think I would be here today. Ten years ago, when I graduated from this program, my daughter was given back her mother. This statement takes on extra importance to me in this moment, because last weekend, my daughter had to bury her father because of his addiction.

[04:55:25] I watched her hope for him drain from her face. Because of this program, she does not have to worry about her mom. Without the small setting, I would have found a way to blend into the crowd and been lost. The small groups helped me to break down the walls my past trauma and abusive relationships had built around me.

[04:55:42] With the help and encouragement of the amazing staff, I was able to find my voice and grow past my addictions. That's from Caitlin Bernard, and this is from her daughter. To whom it may concern, I do not think that shutting New Generations down would benefit anyone. My mother went to New Generations, and they helped her get clean.

[04:56:00] If not for New Generations, my mom wouldn't be here to watch me grow up. If the New Generations program is shut down, you do not know how many people would not be able to get the treatment they need. You do not know whose mom, sister, or daughter New Generations could save. New Generations help so many people, and you never know what kind of impact beyond the women getting treatment this program can have.

[04:56:22] Some little girl or some family can have their mom, sister, or daughter back like I did if this program is not shut down. That is why I don't think it would be a beneficial choice for anyone to close the program, and that is from Sophia Boutard. And the last thing I want to say is cutting new generations is cutting lives.

[04:56:42] Thank you. Thank you. Our next speaker is Tim Thompson. And is there anyone else present after this gentleman who has not spoken already that would like to speak? Okay. Then Tim Thompson, let me ask the clerk if there are any other callers.

[04:57:00] I have one caller. There is one caller. Okay. Let's go with Mr. Thompson and then we'll go to the caller. Welcome. Go to the caller to go for it? No, go ahead. Okay. Good evening. I got the shorts on there. I just want you to know. I'm Tim Thompson with the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations.

[04:57:19] I actually had to come from our membership meeting just now, so I'm a couple of things. I appreciate you taking the time to listen to us today and everybody that's been speaking for the last few days. You may have noted in our motion from the budget that for the last first time in 25 years that I've been involved with the Federation, we did not support fully the funding of the FCPS transfer request.

[04:57:44] Why, you may ask, as the FCPSB has also done, favored the process should be reformed. The Federation believes the large discrepancy between the county executive proposal and FCPS's transfer request indicate a process which has gone astray.

[04:58:07] The Fed urges the county and schools to engage more often, move frankly and more and more, excuse me, with one another, more frankly with one another, to also review their respective timelines to ensure more substantive engagement with each other and the public, and to reestablish the trust which has been lost since the pandemic, which the county citizens, homeowners, and your taxpayers have lost.

[04:58:37] And a summary real quick, if you haven't looked at our motion, we feel that the tax dollars must be spent more effectively, efficiently, and alternative sources of income found instead of continually relying on dollars from the Federation's membership, which are your taxpayers and homeowners.

[04:59:04] We need to look at other things besides real estate taxes, i.e. the meals tax, potentially some kind of a study or a committee to look at for the data centers after you've got a thorough understanding of water usage, electricity, close to residents, et cetera, et cetera.

[04:59:24] We fully want you to retain the CERT and the STEP program and the Community Fire and Rescue, and we need, like I said, diversify the tax base, and we feel that both the FCPS and the county produce a cost-benefit analysis for their different programs, which are most effective, and work better for the schools, move more money there for the schools and for your agencies within the county.

[04:59:55] Apparently people that we've talked to don't quite understand cost-benefit analysis, and so I think that if they looked at that, they'd get a lot more efficiency and use of the tax dollars that our membership pays, along with all the citizens and homeowners of the county.

[05:00:12] Thank you all very much. Appreciate your time. Have a nice evening. Thank you, Tim. Thank you very much. And let me ask who we have on the line. We have Nick Katziadis speaking as an individual. Nick, can you repeat your name, Nick, and then the floor is yours. Nick Cacciotis feels very close.

[05:00:31] Yeah, I'd like to thank you all for the job you do. But one of the things that's alarming to me now, I just retired at 66. And the property taxes, I've been living in the same house in Burke Center since

1988, raised four children here.

[05:00:48] Now we have grandchildren. And I've done somewhat of an analysis of what you've done with the tax relief program. It's a good program, but I don't think it's accommodating certain groups of people who had to save their money and didn't have pensions and have lived here paying taxes for a lot of it's for our school system, which is a great school system.

[05:01:10] And I think maybe there needs to be a more thorough analysis in the program, because the \$440,000 in savings isn't a great amount of savings if you don't have a federal, state, or pension program, which many people don't have.

[05:01:27] I don't. And I just think there should be something done. And I'm asking you, and I know you've had commissions and studies done to look at that, especially residents that have lived here for such a long time that are now senior citizens, because now my mortgage is almost paid off, and the taxes on my house are running about \$800, \$900 a month, which is my largest single expense monthly and that's what i'm guessing i'm asking is there any other way or to commission a group of seniors to have input and your staff at the courthouse is really good the young man there

[05:02:05] very accommodating i've talked to him a few times so i'm asking is there anything that can be done because i know people say 440 is a lot of money but it's not if it's what's going to supplement your social security so that's a question more you're commenting that you know i don't like the factor raising property taxes all the time for seniors so that's a question for you sir thank you very much uh that this we're not a this is not a give and take but we're just accepting your testimony at this point be happy to follow up with you afterwards okay all right so that's my comment i think there there needs to be something done to accommodate senior citizens that are

[05:02:45] retired don't have a pension and had to save in a 401k for their retirement because 440 doesn't get you very far if you're going to live to be 85 and stay in your house so thank you for what you do and appreciate you thinking of an accommodation there thank you thank you very much for calling in we appreciate you okay are there any additional callers on the line no there are not okay so if there are no additional callers on the line that brings us to the end of our testimony for our third day of meetings and with that i move that the board close this public

[05:03:22] hearing while leaving the record open for written testimony until May 6, 2025. That will permit persons who wish to testify on this matter to do so over the next several days by providing written testimony after the close of this evening's public hearings. I'll second that motion along with Supervisor Bierman. Any discussion? Supervisor Stewart? I was going to take this opportunity just to thank our amazing staff, clerk's office, clerk's staff, our Channel 16 people.

[05:03:53] Really, they've been with us. We know how hard you've worked, and we deeply appreciate it. And I know not everybody's here in front of us, but I just wanted to express my appreciation, I'm sure. And budget staff. And budget staff, of course, yeah. You're why we're here, making that work and making it easier for us.

[05:04:10] And public safety. Thanks, please. Everyone in the building, yes. Police officers, thank you for that. The whole family. Okay, seeing no more discussion, all those in favor of the motion say aye. Aye. Anyone opposed, any abstentions, that motion carries.

[05:04:25] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, and with that, the board is adjourned.



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