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Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Budget Public Hearing, Thursday, April 16, 2026

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[00:00:05] Good afternoon, and welcome everyone to our third day of budget public hearings. It is April 16, 2026, and before we move into our public hearings, obviously today is a tough day for Fairfax County, and I want to express my heartfelt condolences and those of the board to those impacted by the tragic event that took place this morning involving Dr. Serena Wanzer and former Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax, and I want to remind folks in our

[00:00:39] community that we live in a place that has resources available for people who are suffering. If someone you love is experiencing domestic violence, we urge individuals to contact the Fairfax County Domestic and Sexual Violence 24-Hour Hotline, which is on the screen before you.

[00:00:58] If you're facing mental health challenges or in crisis, you can call or text 988 to reach the suicide and crisis lifeline. And I say that because people who are facing insurmountable challenges sometimes feel like they're alone. And I just want to reiterate that you are never alone in Fairfax County. And we have world-class resources, partnerships with nonprofits and professionals to help residents in our community that are facing challenges. And so I know our hearts and minds right now are on the Fairfax family, especially the two children of Justin

[00:01:36] and Dr. Serena, and we keep them in our thoughts and prayers as well as the first responders who obviously are traumatized whenever they respond to an incident like this. And so with that we did

start our meeting on Tuesday morning with a moment of silence and I'm going to ask because this has occurred since that time that for those who are able that at this time we all

[00:01:59] rise for a moment of silence. Thank you for that and our world-class police department and support

[00:02:43] services will continue to support the Fairfax family as they would any family that is faced with the challenges that we heard about early this morning. With that we are going to begin our third day of public hearings on the 2027 advertised budget plan, the FY 2027 to FY 2031 advertised capital improvement program with future fiscal years to 2036 and to amend the current appropriation level of the FY 2026 revised budget plan as proposed in the FY 2026

[00:03:16] third quarter review. With that, I do want to remind folks that this is the last night of our public hearings. However, if you have not registered to speak, you can still do that to the clerk off to my right, if you can see him. If you have not signed up to speak and wish to speak, at the end of all the scheduled speakers that I have already on the speakers list, we will entertain speakers who either missed their slot over the last couple days and didn't get a chance to testify, who are present in the auditorium or who wish to call in to provide us testimony before we close the

[00:03:54] public hearings. And with that, I am going to call the first couple of speakers. And if I call your name, please come down close to the front. There's rows of seats down here in the front, plenty of open spots. We don't want to have to watch you walk long distances and down these stairs and run the risk of tripping or falling while you're trying to get to the podium. So if I call your name, please be ready to testify. If you miss your slot, those slots will be at the end of the speakers list, and we will get to those at that time. So that's why I call several speakers at

[00:04:28] the same time to give you time to prepare. With that, our first speaker is Jolly Fernando, to be followed by Irv Katz, Paul Thomas, and Michelle Menapace. If I've called your names, please come down and be close and ready to testify. Speaker number one is Ali Fernando.

[00:04:47] Welcome. Good afternoon, County Board of Supervisors. Thank you for this opportunity to weigh in on the county budget. I'm Hallie Fernando, Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts or More, a local trail advocacy organization that stewards 980 miles of natural surface trails in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

[00:05:14] In Fairfax County, we help maintain trails in Wakefield, Lake Akatink, Brookfield Park, Lake Fairfax, Laurel Hill, Mount Vernon District Park, and the Jerry Connolly Cross Country Trail. I'm here to urge the Board of Supervisors to fully fund the Fairfax County Park Authority.

[00:05:34] The advertised budget plan includes reductions in the FCPA budget, which the agency itself does not recommend. The most recent FCPA needs assessment shows that 84% of county residents identified trails as the most important park amenity and outdoor infrastructure.

[00:05:54] That's an overwhelmingly majority number of residents who consider trails as an important part of living in Fairfax County. If the county is serious about meeting residents' needs, including commuting, recreation, physical health, mental health, and well-being, it must fully fund its park authority.

[00:06:17] Trails allow people to be outside, commune with nature, and keep a healthy lifestyle. Trails also bring people together and provide a sense of community. When Moore organizes Trail Work Days, we get dozens of volunteers of all ages and backgrounds coming together to work on trails, the park amenity they love most.

[00:06:37] Just last Sunday, we held Trail Work in Mount Vernon District Park, where we had four of our volunteers under the age of 12. How awesome is that? Kids choosing to be outside and off screens, giving back to the community on a Sunday morning.

[00:06:53] But we're finding that volunteer work is not enough. FCPA needs funding to keep up with deferred maintenance that volunteers simply cannot do. This includes repairing damaged bridges, potholes, and erosion, clearing down trees and overgrown trail corridors, and ensuring continued safety and usability of a heavily used and well-loved park and trail system.

[00:07:19] More may be primarily mountain bikers who love natural surface trails, but we recognize the important work that FCPA does, including covering important community resources like activity buildings, nature centers, playgrounds, cultural and educational activities, ball courts, athletic fields, and more.

[00:07:38] These are third places and safe spaces for people to be outside. The agency also provides valuable programming for youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and families who may not be able to afford fee-based activities. So please, I urge the board to please fund FCPA.

[00:07:56] Thank you. Thank you very much. Speaker number two is Irv Katz to be followed by Paul Thomas, Michelle Menapace, and Corazon Sandoval Foley. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay, members of the Board of Supervisors, and County Executive Hill.

[00:08:12] My name is Irv Katz, as you've heard, and I'm chair of the Fairfax Area Commission on Aging, also known as the COA, and I speak today on behalf of the COA. We recognize the challenge that you face, reconciling the needs of residents with the available resources to meet those needs, and we thank every one of you for stepping up to that challenge.

[00:08:36] The Commission on Aging wishes to bring to your attention four concerns with the proposed budget plan that we believe would materially affect older people in our county. I will list them and then speak to each one individually.

[00:08:53] The four are reductions in funding for the following. Home delivered meals, low and moderate income home repair pilot program, the Golden Gazette, a publication of the Area Agency on Aging, and kinship family support groups.

[00:09:13] Home-delivered meals serve roughly 960 older adults a year. This is more than a DoorDash-type program. It is a lifeline of nutrition and human contact for homebound residents who do not have the ability, family members, or others who can prepare and deliver meals for them.

[00:09:35] A almost \$392,000 reduction in funding would reduce the number of meals that these older adults receive from 11 to 5 a week. That's one per weekday and nothing on weekends.

[00:09:53] DFS already coordinates well with all the available food and feeding programs in the county. So filling that gap with existing resources is very unlikely. COA asks that the board fully fund the home delivered meal program at the current level.

[00:10:13] The second is eliminating the low and moderate income home repair pilot program. That's not easy to say. A reduction to the budget of \$350,000, which we believe that that reduction adds to the affordable housing crisis in our community.

[00:10:29] This and the county's home repair for the elderly program help keep people in their existing homes at relatively minimal cost per unit. We know that the Board of Supervisors favors preservation of existing housing as a part of its affordable housing strategy.

[00:10:53] The home repair pilot program makes a modest contribution to that strategy. A dwelling livable for a few more years is one less new construction required. Indeed, we would hope for more investment in home repair and modification in future years, particularly for older adults.

[00:11:15] In the short run, we ask that the board continue to fund and support the low- and moderate-income home repair pilot program. Again, \$350,000. Most of you are familiar with the SHAPE strategic plan. In fact, this body helped launch it with funding for a community assessment several years ago, I think in 2019.

[00:11:38] The study, most recent version, revealed that only 37% of respondents rated the availability of information about resources in the community for older adults as excellent or good. Only 37% thought access to information was good.

[00:11:57] Providing residents with access to information about the complex array of services that are and are not available continues to be a major challenge for older adults. The Golden Gazette is a part of the solution.

[00:12:12] It's not the whole solution, but it's a part of the solution. Circulation in March was almost 23,000 editions of the newsletter, about 9,000 via email. We all know that there are older people and younger people who can't access information digitally, and so we need another outlet.

[00:12:34] We're asking the board to continue the current level of funding for another year, allowing the AAA to explore alternatives to circulation while also containing costs. For example, reducing the format of the publication and or appealing to faith-based and community-based organizations to repeat the information and disseminate it through their publications.

[00:13:04] And finally, the kinship family support group program. We would ask for the board to continue that program. This is where relatives, many of whom are older adults, help care for children, and they're the best people to do so.

[00:13:19] This is basically for a support program. Thank you for the opportunity. Thank you very much. Speaker number three is Paul Thomas, to be followed by Michelle Menapace, Corazon Sandoval-Foley, and Kathy Benn. Welcome. Hi, my name is Paul Thomas, and I'm chair of the Human Services Council.

[00:13:40] Thank you for your service and for this opportunity to speak. I'm here to provide background and amplification to accompany the budget letter that the Human Services Council sent you earlier this week. First thanks for a couple actually first didn't know what he said um second of all thanks for a couple of key items that you funded housing homeless services and food assistance will help the county meet steadily growing demand and hhs contract rate increases will help address major staffing challenges faced by the county's partners but while the county is addressing homelessness

[00:14:16] and food insecurity we need to do a lot more to address affordable housing if we don't support the Alice population particularly, who are working hard to make ends meet, many of them will slide down into dire straits. And while contract rate increases will add to direct agency funding for nonprofits and boost CCFP outlays overall, we urge you to increase funding beyond the 5%.

[00:14:40] Fairfax County needs to be ready to expand services so we can fill the gaps that the federal government is opening up. Some general recommendations. First, hold the line on the budget. Spending on human services now will prevent bigger spending on human services, education, public safety, and other county services down the road. Second, preserve staffing. Our letter spells out support and advocacy for key specific programs, but the broad expenditures to improve compensation that will help the county and our partners hire and retain high quality staff are

[00:15:14] critical. None of our programs can succeed without the staff to support them. And finally, support the HHS Innovation Fund, which helps the county identify and launch programs that show how the government can work with nonprofits and businesses to support our communities.

[00:15:32] These public-private collaborations are critical to responsive, scalable solutions. Most recently, the Council is considering funding a program that enables community-based organizations to improve SNAP enrollment rates for qualified families. I'll close by quoting three very wise people.

[00:15:50] These are visionaries who understand how important human services are to our economy and our community. First, without stable housing, nothing else in your life can be stable. Fundamentally, when it comes to building our middle class, it means building more accessible housing.

[00:16:07] Second, providing services and resources to assist the most financially vulnerable members of our community can change the trajectory of someone's life. And third, investing in people is not only right morally, but also makes smart fiscal sense.

[00:16:22] must continue to play a major role in protecting the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you to Supervisors Lusk and Beerman and Chairman McKay for your sage words. Thank you for your time and attention. Thank you very much, Paul. Speaker number four is Michelle Menapace, to be followed by Karazon Sandoval-Foley, Kathy Benn, and Margaret Witkowski.

[00:16:45] Welcome. That was easy for you to say. On behalf of the Human Services Council, I want to thank you for this opportunity to highlight some of the recommendations that we included in our letter to you earlier. First and foremost, we want to emphasize our strong support for adding a quarter penny for affordable housing.

[00:17:03] We're not your only advisory group to urge this. The Community Action Advisory Board has housing as their number one priority. Both the Alliance for Human Services and the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee support that one-quarter penny set-aside.

[00:17:20] We echo the sentiment Chairman McKay expressed at the third-quarter review talking about set-asides for major improvements and maintenance when he applauded staff for their recommendations as prudent. We believe the same thinking holds here.

[00:17:35] The sooner housing funds can be put to use, the more we save. And those savings extend far beyond just simple capital outlays. Housing first reduces homelessness, of course, but the effect has a

snowballing impact by reducing health-related spending, increasing employment, and positively impacting public safety while decreasing incarceration.

[00:18:02] So importantly, too, residents of all economic circumstances maintain dignity with the best opportunity to achieve their maximum potential. Relatedly, the Human Services Council is pleased by their proposed commitment to housing and homeless services via new staffing and increased funding for emergency food and housing assistance.

[00:18:23] We stress, however, that these millions of dollars are mere Band-Aids until a sufficient supply of affordable housing, including rental properties, is a reality. The Council recommends, as our colleagues on the Council on Aging, that you maintain the low and moderate income home repair pilot program.

[00:18:42] And we also agree with the Health Care Advisory Board when they see the disconnect between proposed reductions for home-delivered meals and the millions that has been added to boost emergency food and housing support. Homebound individuals have been receiving 10 meals a week since 1990, and that was boosted to 11 in 2015.

[00:19:05] To reduce these provisions to five a week would be a harsh impact on a service that's already inadequate to meet needs. We appreciate the proposed 5% contract rate increase, but hope you find a means to boost that. At 5%, our community contractors, particularly via the consolidated community funding pool, will be unable to expand services at this time of unrelenting need.

[00:19:31] Various federal funding constraints, either outright reductions or eliminations or via changes in qualification requirements or greater administrative demands, add to those community partners' service burdens that our county funding could help offset.

[00:19:48] Finally, the council has charged me with asking you to restore the annual baseline funding for our innovation fund. A few ideas were really made apparent in the past week of how important such funding can be. The new state pilot program with \$25 million in funding for a child care pilot offers tremendous potential for new projects, leveraging non-tax dollars to address that critical worker need.

[00:20:15] The council just this week heard two requests from the Food Council, one to develop a SNAP ambassador program that is working quite well in Arlington. In collaboration with Real Food for Kids, they want to increase county SNAP enrollment for qualified families.

[00:20:34] And we also heard about a request to support Frontier Kitchen's work in developing and mentoring food micro-business entrepreneurs. Public-private partnerships like these are exactly why the Innovation Fund was created.

[00:20:50] Tapping into community and volunteer engagement while leveraging private dollars expand the reach of human services programs and services while reducing ever-growing demand on tax dollars. They also have the potential to increase our business tax base.

[00:21:07] Thank you for your time, your consideration of our community's needs, and your community's input on how those might be met, and for your leadership in making us one Fairfax. Thank you. Thank you, Michelle. Speaker number five is Corazon Sandoval Foley, to be followed by Kathy Benn, Margaret Witkiewicz, Heather Thomas.

[00:21:27] Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Corazon Sandoval Foley, founding chairman of the Foley Community Center Project, also known as the Center Without Walls, founded in 2007 by me and my

late husband, Michael Daniel Foley.

[00:21:45] It moved in 2025 to the temporary center at Huntsman Square while awaiting the bond referendum for the Springfield Community Center. The board decided with this budget to defer the referendum for the third time from 2020 to 2024 to 2026 and now to 2032.

[00:22:07] Thanks to Springfield Supervisor Pat Herity, who agreed to move forward with progress with the review of the site options for the community center, notably South Run Park or the 10-acre site with the Burke Elementary School.

[00:22:23] He also supports a review for optimizing the use of Huntsman Square to allow for use by youth and taxpayers who are not seniors. For today, I request that the board do fair treatment and follow precedent of honoring center founders like the Mott Center and name the Huntsman Square lease as the Foley Community Center at Burke Springfield.

[00:22:51] I respect the community leadership of the Mott's. It's very similar to the Foley contributions. Now, the one Fairfax policy would be honored with this naming petition as my late husband was Irish-American, Vietnam veteran, and son of the American Revolution, and I was honored as the first Asian American citizen of the year.

[00:23:16] The Foley leadership since 2007 served some 1,000 senior registrants annually for many years. And I should note that the county has named least facilities like the Penn Community Center. Allow me to thank Chris Leonard, Lloyd Tucker, and Evan Braff for outstanding support of us senior taxpayers.

[00:23:39] Chris and Evan worked with us in developing the center since 2007, and I deeply appreciate the kind note from Chris Leonard, and I quote, It has been a privilege working with you, Cora, through the years to bring support and resources to the senior adult community.

[00:23:59] Last year's opening of the Burke-Springfield Center for Active Adults would not have happened without you. I know it is frustrating for the permanent facility to be pushed back again, but thanks to you and the new center, the community is in a much stronger position than the last time it was deferred.

[00:24:22] Many thanks to Chris Leonard, Supervisor Herity, Chairman McKay, and the Board of Supervisors. Thank you. Thank you, Cora. Speaker number five is Kathy Benn, to be followed by Margaret Witkiewicz, Heather Thomas. Welcome. Hello, my name is Kathy Benn. I'm the Vice President of Residential Services for Second Story. I'm also a senior therapist and have worked with the nonprofit's young people for 15 years. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

[00:24:54] Second Story has been a cornerstone of support in Fairfax County for the past 54 years, often serving young people who have nowhere else to turn. Our mission is to equip local youth and their families with the critical tools, housing, and communities of support needed to achieve lasting self-sufficiency.

[00:25:14] When a teenager runs away from abuse or instability, we provide immediate shelter. When an 18-year-old is forced out of their home, we provide housing and a path forward. When a young person becomes pregnant or is parenting and needs help learning how to care for their babies, we provide skills and support to build a healthy future.

[00:25:37] When students go home to empty houses or empty refrigerators, we provide meals, supervision, and stability through after-school programs. When families are on the brink of crisis, we step

in before their crisis becomes more costly.

[00:25:53] Every day, Second Story confronts and offers solutions to issues facing our community. We are grateful to our county partners and others who work alongside of us to care for those who fall through the cracks. The prevention and early intervention programs we run are essential to vulnerable county residents.

[00:26:15] We also work closely with Fairfax County Public Schools through the Homeless Liaison's Office and communicate on a weekly basis about young people in need of safe housing. We work with the Community Services Board and appreciate their help identifying young people dealing with mental health challenges, substance abuse, or who need disability services.

[00:26:37] We also work closely with the Department of Family Services, Child Protective Services, and others to meet the needs of youth requiring interagency support. Together, we form a safety net, but Second Story's role in that system is distinct and irreplaceable.

[00:26:55] This year, we are facing a critical turning point, and we need your support more than ever. We have been funded continuously by Health and Human Services Basic Center Program for 49 years until 2025.

[00:27:11] We have been funded continuously by Health and Human Services Maternal Group Home for 24 years until 2025. While we continue to receive some federal support, it covers only a fraction of what it takes to operate these programs, and those funds are not secure after they expire this year.

[00:27:31] Second story for teens in crisis, our basic center program and our 24-7 emergency home for teens is the only program of its kind in the region. We help families pause, build coping skills, break cycles of abuse and neglect, and ultimately reunite in a healthier place.

[00:27:53] If our doors close, teens in crisis in Fairfax County have nowhere to turn. If we don't receive county funding to sustain this program this year, the impact could be significant. More youth on the streets, higher dropout rates, increased homelessness, substance use, trafficking, and more young people coming into contact with law enforcement, emergency rooms, and other public systems that are far more expensive and less effective. For years, Second Story has supplemented its youth programs with community funding to help close persistent

[00:28:29] gaps in federal and county support. Now we are at a critical juncture, facing difficult decisions due to ongoing uncertainty. We stretch every dollar, but we cannot continue to absorb losses at this scale without making reductions that will directly impact the young people who rely on us.

[00:28:49] If we are forced to scale down operations, there are no other agencies in the county equipped to take in young people the same way. Most adult and family shelters are not designed to safely serve youth experiencing homelessness.

[00:29:05] They often lack the specialized staffing, programming, and protections for minors. Mixing vulnerable youth with adult populations poses serious safety risks. That's why it's imperative that Second Story remains a dedicated safe haven specifically designed for youth in crisis.

[00:29:25] The long-term cost of not supporting these vulnerable youth, especially if they fall into chronic homelessness, cannot be overstated. These programs are not only unique, they are essential. We deserve

adequate resources needed to do this work because our youth deserve safety, stability, and a real chance at a better future.

[00:29:44] With your support, we can continue to show up for them every day and help change the trajectory of their lives. Thank you. Thank you. We're on speaker number seven, Margaret Witkiewicz, to be followed by Heather Thomas, Victoria Weish, and Olivia Weish.

[00:30:00] Welcome. Good afternoon. My name is Lauren Freeman, and I'm the case manager at the Second Story for Young Mothers program. I am reading this today on behalf of my client, Margaret. My name is Margaret, and I was born in Virginia and have many siblings.

[00:30:17] Growing up was a constant battle for love, and I developed poor mental health. I started self-harming at just 12 years old. At 16, I was admitted to a psychiatric ward. I spent my 17th birthday in the hospital surrounded by people I did not know.

[00:30:35] As soon as I got out, I used vaping and weed to cope. Just making it through graduation was a struggle. But one year later, I finally made it to the other side, graduating with a 4.2 GPA. Through it all, I had one friend that stuck with me.

[00:30:52] Mia, she was a firefighter, a beaming light in the darkness of the world. But in 2023, Mia passed away in the line of duty. Immediately, severe depression crept back into my life. I nearly joined her in the afterlife on several occasions.

[00:31:09] Six months later came those two pink lines. Getting pregnant saved my life. I felt like I had purpose again, but life didn't get easier. My parents kicked me out on Mother's Day, and my daughter's father's abuse towards me got worse, and I left him.

[00:31:27] During my pregnancy, I worked two full-time jobs, went to school for phlebotomy, and was drug-free. A friend of mine and their family graciously took me in. When my daughter was born, I knew I would do anything for her. I worked to provide for us and save up money while my friend's mom kindly watched my baby.

[00:31:48] One day, I found out that my friend's mom had been in a car accident with my daughter in the car and hadn't told me anything. I immediately switched my daughter to daycare, which triggered abuse and gaslighting from my friend's mom. I knew I needed to find somewhere else to stay.

[00:32:05] I reached out to my aunt, and she helped me find Second Story. Second Story provided for my basic needs and referred me to a daycare subsidy that saved me thousands. I was soon able to get a higher paying job, and I am proud to say that since I moved in September, I have been able to save nearly \$10,000.

[00:32:26] I have also met amazing young women who I am grateful to be able to raise my child alongside. In the last seven months, I have grown exponentially in my confidence that I actually can build a consistent and loving life for my baby girl, and she is absolutely flourishing in her new home.

[00:32:44] I can honestly say that I am excited to see what the future holds for us. I am beyond grateful for Second Story, and I want to do anything in my power to make sure this organization can continue giving chances to young women like me.

[00:33:01] Thank you for letting me share my story. Thank you. Speaker number eight is Heather Thomas, to be followed by Victoria Weish, Olivia Weish, and Larry Saragoza. Welcome. Good afternoon.

[00:33:21] My name is Heather Thomas. I am the vice chair of the Community Action Advisory Board and the president of the Family Council for Equity in Education. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. This year, I've decided to take a different approach when speaking to you. For years, I've stood before you urging action on affordable care, child care, and housing.

[00:33:42] I've shared facts and numbers, but behind those statistics is a deeper truth. Families are paying a heavy price. You will receive a full copy of my testimony with additional numbers and considerations. But today, I stand before you to highlight things that you must know about these two important issues.

[00:34:01] The experts say that poverty has a profound multidimensional side effects, causing chronic stress, severe health disparities, lower life expectancies, higher chronic disease risk, limited access to resources, long-term mental health issues, and reduced economic opportunity.

[00:34:19] I'm here to let you know that is all very true. My own family has felt the toll of an unstable child care system in Fairfax County and how it can cause families to lose it all and enter into poverty, relying on benefits or even to become homeless. It happened to us. My husband, an honorably discharged combat vet, and I are both college graduates. Years before we landed in poverty, we both had steady full-time jobs, his in technology, mine in human services. We were secure firmly in the middle class.

[00:34:52] When our one son was born, we were lucky to find a caring in-home provider, even though it cost more than 30% of my paycheck. Knowing our child was safe was worth it to us, though. When our family grew, the situation became very challenging.

[00:35:09] For two children, child care costs took more than 90% of my paycheck. We didn't qualify for any type of assistance, but we couldn't quite afford care. Eventually, I had to leave my job. That one decision sent us into a spiral. Financial hardship, food insecurity, eventually leading us into homelessness.

[00:35:29] We have been rebuilding ever since, or trying to. And child care providers that the system relies on, they are struggling too. They are underpaid, overworked, and stretched to their limits. Why not make Fairfax County an example and lead the way to create and ensure that all families, regardless of income, have access to quality affordable child care, early child education programs, as well as true affordable housing?

[00:35:59] I am grateful for your penny fund for affordable housing, but it's not enough. You must do more. We are grateful for the child care investments, but you must do more. Soon you will hear from our twin, my twins. Their success shows what's possible with access to these programs.

[00:36:18] Ironically, though, they didn't receive these services until we lost everything. I urge you to continue to fight for us and be bold. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number nine is Victoria Weiss, to be followed by Olivia Weiss, Larry Zaragoza, and Suzanne Levy.

[00:36:36] If I called your name, please come down close and be ready to testify. Welcome.

[00:36:49] Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Victoria Weich, and I'm a fourth grader at Borough Run Elementary School. First, I want to thank the board for keeping middle school after school programs funded last year.

[00:37:11] These programs are not optional. They provide a structured, supervised place for students during the hours when kids are most vulnerable, and I've seen the impact in my own family. One of my

older brothers is currently attending high school. When he attended middle school, he participated in the MSAS program.

[00:37:30] and it made a real difference. Before the program, he struggled to make friends and build healthy habits. After joining, we saw tremendous growth. He became more confident, improved his emotional and physical health, and discovered a passion for volleyball. That's why I'm concerned about transferring middle school after school programs. This isn't a neutral administrative change. It has real consequences. Moving these programs can disrupt students' development, limit access to enrichment, and create a path towards service reductions or fees that many families can't

[00:38:06] afford. Right now, MSAS is funded through NCS. Moving MSAS from NCS to FCPS could put the program under school budget constraints, increasing the risk of fee-based structures or cuts. Proposed fiscal year 2027 cuts could impact daily services for 4,500 students and affect more than 24,000 middle schoolers overall. 39% of parents have said their children would be left home alone without these programs. That is not an acceptable outcome. The board has the authority

[00:38:45] to prevent that and I'm asking you to do so. I also want to bring the elimination of team drop-in sites to your attention. These sites provide a safe place for teens to socialize and take part in recreational opportunities. Eliminating them is harmful because it removes critical safe spaces and can worsen youth homelessness, mental health crises, and social isolation. Research shows drop-in center users are twice as likely to secure permanent housing or earn a GED. These third spaces give teens a non-judgmental environment to grow in a healthy

[00:39:20] way. Drop-in centers also provide basic essentials like food, clean clothes, and hygiene supplies, which can prevent youth from having to enter dangerous situations to meet their needs. Without these services, young people are at higher risk of arrest, unemployment, and substance abuse. I respectfully urge the board to reconsider the proposal to eliminate teen drop-in sites and to fully maintain funding these essential programs.

[00:39:49] Please protect these spaces so teens in our community can continue to have the support and opportunities they need. Thank you for your time listening. Please continue to put student safety and well-being first by protecting and fully funding these programs. Thank you. Well done.

[00:40:06] Well done. Our next speaker is Olivia Weiss. Sister is a tough act to follow. To be followed by Larry Zaragoza, Suzanne Levy, and Miriam Smolin.

[00:40:22] Welcome, Olivia. Hello, my name is Olivia Weich. I'm currently in the fourth grade at Bowen Elementary in Level 4 AAP with my sister. First, I want to thank you for funding the Commons Mount Vernon Child Care Center. This center is important to so many families in our communities.

[00:40:42] You have provided huge generosity towards the local community with your support. Thank you for that. Second, I wanted to come here today to urge you to not eliminate the contract for the part-time preschool program. The contract for this preschool program currently serves 150 young children throughout 13 classrooms in the county.

[00:41:05] This preschool program serves children between the ages of 4 and 5 who will be entering kindergarten the following school year. The program provides free programming that assists with children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, all with a focus on beginner literacy and positive child-adult interactions.

[00:41:28] A big consequence of cutting the program is limiting access to early learning programs and preparing children to be school-ready. Now I would like to talk about my experience with Head Start that also provides early learning skills like how this part-time school program provides. When I was little, I was struggling with communication. My mom put me in Head Start and I eventually got better and better in my communication skills. Without Head Start, I and many others would still be struggling with

[00:42:03] communication skills. I definitely would not be in the AAP right now. I know that I was partly learning how to cope with my feelings. I felt better at using my communication, social, emotional skills. I know that my parents also saw change and they were proud. I know the head start was a safe and social environment for me, like how this program will be for other kids like me when I was younger. I urge you to continue to create and support the expansion of early education programs

[00:42:37] in our county. Investing in our youth is a vital for a positive outcome for all of our futures. Our youth will become tomorrow's leaders, educators, board supervisors, doctors, and even presidents.

[00:42:54] Thank you for your attention to these important matters. Nice job, Olivia. Thank you. Nice job. Speaker number 11 is Larry Zaragoza to be followed by Suzanne Levy, Miriam Smolin, and Laura Eakin Erlacher.

[00:43:11] Welcome, Larry. Thank you, Chairman McKay. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Larry Zaragoza. I chair the Environmental Quality Advisory Council. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

[00:43:27] One of the things I would just note is that we appreciate this is yet another difficult budget year. And so we're going to give you some suggestions, but I think that in order to maintain the attractiveness of Fairfax County to residents, attract new people, give people what they want, I think it is important to continue to take care of the environment, and we really appreciate all that you have done to do that.

[00:43:55] A couple areas I'd like to emphasize in terms of the environment. One is HR1, funding associated with HR1, has significantly impacted a number of different programs in the county. You all know that, and we would just encourage you to the extent you can to try to keep things going so that when you can get money again and fund these programs, that they be funded because they are important for our future.

[00:44:25] I know that staff is working on grants and seeking to build that up to the extent they can, but they have been impacted, as you know, and we appreciate the efforts to rebuild things. We also want to note that we appreciate the fact that the county is building up the funding for OEC.

[00:44:45] So one of the comments we made before was that funding for OEC was largely coming from carryover, and the county has been building that up, which is good, we appreciate it. So that is important. But we do think it's very important to fund the many programs, OEC, in order to support the many programs that it does support, ranging from the operational energy plan to work with JET and tracking things, CCAP, Brazilian Fairfax.

[00:45:16] Those are all important. We also want to note that we appreciate the support that you've given to the Fairfax County Park Authority. They have many needs. They are stressed for budget, as you well know. But I know that the board listened to them in terms of their priorities and funded things for new parks and for waste management, which were priorities that they had, and we very much appreciate that. I also want to touch on the HVAC upgrades, which I know that

[00:45:53] Dr. Goparud raised to you yesterday. So you probably know that there are two reports that are appended to EQUAC's comments and Dr. Goparud prepared those looking at energy use, energy savings as a result of upgrades. What really strikes me is despite the fact that the cost of energy is going up, these upgrades have actually saved money in terms of the operational cost for both the schools and for county facilities when you look at things on a facility by facility

[00:46:29] basis. EQUAC had never done an analysis like this, and I credit Dr. Gopperwood for taking the initiative and undertaking the analysis and having it reviewed by EQUAC. That was a pleasure to have that done. And I would just note the costs are not, the cost savings are not insignificant.

[00:46:52] They get their millions and millions of dollars, so I think that's important. In addition to that, we wanted to express our support for the proposed increases that were being proposed. One was for the sewer services.

[00:47:10] The other one was for the refuge collection. Those both seem important and reasonable. Finally, most years we say something about stormwater. The needs for stormwater are significant, and we do think it would be good to plan to increase the stormwater rate tax at some point.

[00:47:36] And we appreciate that's not in the cards this year, but that's just something we'd like you to keep in mind. Finally, we want to thank you for your consideration on all these items. We very much appreciate your support for the environment. We think it's critical for the future of Fairfax.

[00:47:54] And if you have any questions, I'm happy to answer. Thank you very much, Larry. I appreciate your testimony. Speaker number 12 is Suzanne Levy, to be followed by Miriam Smolin and Laura Eakin-Erlacher. Welcome.

[00:48:12] Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Suzanne Levy, and I am the chair of the Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees. I appreciate the time you have given me today to speak about one of our community's most vital and trusted resources, our library.

[00:48:28] In fiscal year 2025, FCPL logged over 3.3 million visits to our 22 branches, nine of which, with the addition of Kingstown last weekend, our regional libraries open seven days a week. This is an average of over 275,000 visitors per month.

[00:48:48] Last year, FCPL provided an estimated return value of over \$5 per dollar invested in our library system. The FY27 advertised budget and particularly the Capital Improvements Program is evidence of strong county support for a library system that is geographically accessible, properly staffed, and offers convenient hours that allow us to provide excellent service, for which we thank you.

[00:49:15] FCPL contributes to nearly all of the county's strategic plan areas, most notably lifelong learning, economic opportunity, and cultural and recreational opportunities. Next week is National Library Week, when we recognize the role libraries and library workers have in our communities.

[00:49:36] This year's theme is especially appropriate, Find Your Joy. Libraries are a true community hub, buildings full of learning, information, entertainment, and fellowship for people of all ages and backgrounds. Our library system sees increasing usage year after year in foot traffic and program attendance, but even more so in readership.

[00:49:59] The library's collection includes adult and children's books in English, as well as several other languages, magazines, newspapers, maps, photographs, audiobooks, e-books, e-magazines, and e-

audiobooks. In FY 2025, FCPL circulated approximately 12 million items and for the first time recorded over 4 million checkouts of digital materials.

[00:50:24] Only a handful of other library systems in the world have met that milestone in a single year. But with those record usage numbers come costs. As we shared in our last joint meeting, the library is facing substantial inflationary pressures, especially in the e-book and e-audiobook market.

[00:50:45] The proposed FY27 budget begins to address the one glaring underinvestment in library services for the county, the library's materials budget. Twenty-four years ago, FCPL had a \$6.5 million materials budget, which was comparable to regional library systems of the time, a modest investment of \$6.36 per resident per year for new books.

[00:51:11] Had that budget increased by 2% each year, today it would be close to \$11 million, or about \$9 per resident per year. Given all the innovations and inflationary measures that have occurred since 2002, this is a reasonable level of investment.

[00:51:29] FCPL has identified internal personnel savings that can be permanently moved to the collection budget along with some inflationary increase to increase the materials budget from its \$3 million current base to \$4 million.

[00:51:45] The Library Board of Trustees respectfully asks that you endorse this proposal that is a part of the FY27 advertised budget and commit to continuing to annually increase the base budget for library materials until it reaches a level which is competitive with our neighboring jurisdictions, which at this time is between \$8 and \$11 million per year.

[00:52:09] We are focused on the materials budget because new knowledge and sufficient copies of in-demand materials are vital to our function as a source of lifelong learning materials which support our diverse residents' economic, academic, cultural, and practical lives.

[00:52:27] While the items we have been able to add to our book collection are excellent and well used, our customers are often waiting weeks and months on hold to get a copy. And we do not have the breadth of items we should in a number of important areas.

[00:52:43] With your support, we look forward to continuing to provide our residents of all ages with current, relevant materials, programs, and other services. We thank you for championing our libraries now and in the future.

[00:52:59] And I want to point out that many of our volunteers, friends of the library groups, are here today in support of our library. So we thank them also for all they do for us. Thank you very much. Thank you, Suzanne, and thank you all for coming out.

[00:53:15] Speaker number 13 is Miriam Smolin to be followed by Laura Eakin-Urlacher and Alyssa Dawn Keith. Welcome. Good afternoon. I'm Miriam Smolin, chair of the Fairfax Library Foundation. Just to start with a point of personal privilege, I've been honored to be in a volunteer leadership role supporting the library system for the last 14 years.

[00:53:37] First as a trustee, then as chair of the board of trustees, and the last four years of chair of the Fairfax Library Foundation. This is my final year as chair of the foundation, so it will be the last time I have to address you in support of the library and support of the library's budget.

[00:53:53] Through my various positions, I've been deeply impressed with the Fairfax County Public Library's breadth of resources and innovative programs, and even more impressed by the depth of the dedication of the county's librarians and other library system employees. As Suzanne mentioned, next week is National Library Week, but today, actually April 16th, is National Librarian Day, so this is a particularly appropriate time to talk about supporting our library.

[00:54:20] FCPL contributes to nearly all the county strategic plan areas, but most notably lifelong learning, economic opportunity, and cultural and recreational opportunities. The Fairfax Library Foundation has served as a partner supporting our library community by raising money from supporters of the library and providing that funding to support the extras along with friends, groups, and other supporters.

[00:54:44] Let me highlight just a few of the foundation programs from this past year. Our Cornerstone Early Literacy Program's Ready to Read and 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten funded 1,500 story times for nearly 27,000 participants via FCPL's early literacy team last year.

[00:55:03] The foundation's grants provided 25,000 picture books as gifts to children from across the county. Last year, we awarded \$53,000 in scholarships to Fairfax County students going to college and library employees pursuing advanced training.

[00:55:20] In this coming year, the foundation has committed to purchasing and equipping a van so that FCPL can have a mobile unit to use where libraries are closed for renovation. I'm most proud of the program that started during my time as chair, which highlights the foundation's commitment to children's literacy.

[00:55:37] On June 13, 2026, in a couple of months, we'll be holding the fourth annual Children's Summer Reading Festival here on the Government Center grounds. It's truly a highlight for the summer. Last year's festival saw over 1,500 attendees come to the festival at Sherwood Regional Library, and nearly 8,000 attendees have attended over the last four years. And in 2025, the festival supported a record-breaking 23,000 sign-ups for the summer reading program. Overall, we've seen a 60% increase in the summer reading program since the festival's founding. I'm also happy to report that the community's support for the library is

[00:56:17] definitely growing and we see it in our fundraising. Our fundraising is actually already over budget by 14 percent and we still have a quarter of the year to go. But having reported all this positive news, I have to reinforce what Susanna Levy just spoke about. Nothing can replace the long-term financial commitment to the library system from the county budget. The proposed FY27 budget begins to address the long-term underinvestment in the library's materials budget, which is really the face of the library to most of the public. This underinvestment shows up in multiple ways. Just a couple of examples, we've had a 26 percent decline in the number of books purchased from

[00:56:57] 2021 to 2025, and a decrease of 12 percent in the non-fiction collection over the last seven years. The foundation would like to give our support to the FCPL proposal to increase its material budget by using savings related to internal personnel management.

[00:57:14] We respectfully ask that you endorse this proposal as part of the FY27 advertised budget, and we would also ask that you commit to continuing to annually increase the base budget for library materials until it reaches a level which is competitive with the other jurisdictions around us.

[00:57:30] The Foundation appreciates the Board's continuing interest in our goals, and we look forward to working together in the future to support our public library. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Miriam. Thank you for all your years of service. Much appreciated. Speaker number 14 is Laura Eakin-Urlacher, to be followed by Alyssa Dawn Keith and Rachel Abbott.

[00:57:51] If I called your name, please be ready. Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Laura Eakin-Urlacher, chair of the Fairfax County Park Foundation Board of Directors. I was honored to serve as a board director when the foundation was established in 2000, and it is especially meaningful to be here as the Foundation celebrates 25 years of success.

[00:58:16] I stood before you a year ago to share the Park Foundation's concern about the need to raise \$300,000 in FY2026 essential operations to cover the salaries of our three staff, an unprecedented shift in our fundraising approach.

[00:58:32] At that time, while balancing significant budget reductions across county agencies, You demonstrated a clear commitment to the Foundation's work and success. We are deeply appreciative of your engagement and support. Thank you for listening, and together with our Park Authority partner, allowing us to raise these funds over two fiscal years.

[00:58:54] That flexibility has been critical to our near-term viability. I'm pleased to return one year later with an update. This has been a successful year of fundraising, not just in the numbers, but what those numbers represent. the strength of our mission, and the commitment of this community to our county park system.

[00:59:15] Over the past four fiscal years, unrestricted donations have averaged approximately 8.5% of our total giving. So our priority this year was transparency, educating our donors about this shift in need to unrestricted donations.

[00:59:32] Many were accustomed to 100% of their contributions going directly to a park, program, or event. Across each of our major campaigns this past fall, Giving Tuesday, year-end, and upcoming this spring, together with outreach to major donors, we made supporting unrestricted donations for essential operations a clear and consistent priority.

[00:59:56] And our community responded. As of March 31st, unrestricted donation increased to 16% of total revenue, up from 4% the prior year. The foundation has raised close to \$230,000 in support of essential operations, fully meeting our budget obligation for this fiscal year.

[01:00:18] And we continue fundraising to meet the current year's budgeted operational expenses as we look forward to fiscal year 2027. At the heart of this success is extraordinary leadership. Our executive director, Bobby Longworth, and our director of development, Margaret Thaxton, will be retiring at the end of this year.

[01:00:38] Over the past 15 years, they have transformed the foundation, growing revenues from nearly \$336,000 in fiscal year 2010 to more than \$5.4 million last year. And more importantly, they've built the relationships and trust that defined its strength today.

[01:00:59] Their impact will be lasting, and they will be greatly missed, and we thank them for the leadership that has brought the foundation to where it is today. As the Foundation enters a new chapter of

leadership, we look ahead with confidence and enthusiasm for our continued collaboration with the Park Authority, and we welcome Deputy Director Nigel Fields.

[01:01:21] Thank you to the Board of Supervisors and to the Park Authority for 25 years of collaboration. We are proud to be your partner and to continue our work together, bringing private dollars to public priorities and supporting the community in ways government funding alone cannot always achieve.

[01:01:37] As my tenure as board chair concludes at the end of this year, it is only fitting that I am followed by Elisa Keefe, one of our newest board members and the next generation of foundation leadership. Thank you all. Thank you very much. Appreciate that. Speaker number 15 is Elisa Dawn Keefe to be followed by Rachel Abbott and Becca DeDirt.

[01:01:59] Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay, members of the Board of Supervisors. My name is Alyssa Keefe, and I am honored to serve on the board of the foundation of the Fairfax County Park Foundation. First, I want to thank Laura for her leadership. Over the past year and throughout her tenure as chair, she, along with a deeply committed foundation staff and executive committee, has guided the foundation through a challenging time with clarity, with transparency, and unwavering commitment to partnership.

[01:02:30] That leadership has positioned the foundation for what comes next. Last year, we came to you, as you just heard, during a period of real uncertainty. And through the dedication and perseverance of our staff and the commitment of this community, we found a path forward. And as you just heard, the foundation not only met that moment, we delivered.

[01:02:48] That matters because it reinforces something fundamental, that the public-private partnership model, it works. For more than two decades, that foundation has brought additional resources into the park system. Donors give because they trust that their contributions go directly to impact and align with the county and the park authority's priorities, and that trust is an asset.

[01:03:11] It's one that we must continue to build on, and we are also at an inflection point. The priorities that you heard this week about maintaining an aging system and expanding equitable access, those are growing, and at the same time, the foundation is entering a period of real leadership transition and evolution.

[01:03:29] If we want to grow and meet that moment, we must ensure the foundation is strategically aligned with the board and the park authority's vision and priorities, and that our infrastructure is strong so that we are planning not just year to year, but on a three to five year horizon. That starts with a seamless transition to new leadership.

[01:03:47] It also requires an infrastructure investment that supports a growing fundraising effort so that we can deliver on those commitments to our community. Philanthropy, as you know, it's built on trust, but it's also sustained by consistent execution, day in and day out.

[01:04:05] This is where the public-private partnership model becomes essential. And earlier this week, you heard from Mike Reynolds, Tim Hackman, and Bill Bowie, who laid out both the challenges and the opportunities facing our park system, and I want to recognize Deputy Director Nigel Fields for his leadership and partnership.

[01:04:22] There is significant work ahead this year, and together we're positioned for success. The role of the foundation is clear, to bring private dollars to public priorities, to expand access where fees cannot, and to help accelerate and enhance the investments you all are making.

[01:04:37] So as you make decisions about 2027 and beyond, I want to reaffirm on behalf of the board that we stand ready as a disciplined and accountable partner, one that builds on your investments and helps extend their reach. I'm excited about what comes next.

[01:04:53] So thank you for what you do, and I'm ready to get to work. Thank you. Speaker number 16 is Rachel Abbott, to be followed by Becca DeDirt, Mary Great Pios, and Ambreen Ahmed.

[01:05:11] Several of those are callers, so welcome.

[01:05:33] Okay, hi. Hi, Board of Supervisors. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. My name is Rachel Abbott, and I'm a Springfield resident. And I understand that you have a lot of decisions and difficult decisions for this budget.

[01:05:53] I'm here to ask you to keep the CoHopLink contract with CSB. I'm multi-disabled, and I come from a vision-disabled family, and I'm speaking with my lived experience. There is no other program in the county like Be Well, like the Be Well program.

[01:06:15] And you might think that cutting it is okay because CSB is still going to be there. But CSB has long wait lists and therapy can be like once or twice a month. Be Well steps in and provides weekly support so that people can have consistency and they aren't waiting weeks for help.

[01:06:46] Be Well is a program and a connection that is for marginalized and low-income communities. I'm sorry. You're doing fine.

[01:07:03] My brothers, I don't have everything memorized. You're doing fine. Can I just need one second? So Be Well is part of, like I said, supporting marginalized and low-income communities.

[01:07:18] and it has accessible education support and social groups and a peer well i mean in a peer support system that is invaluable because they are genuinely they genuinely care about each person and invest in supporting each person they are right beside you walking beside you with you they see you, they understand you. And why? Because they might have had the similar lived experiences. And they know the power of peer support, the lifeline power that it has. And

[01:07:57] clinical therapy is very important, but it is a different kind of modality. And it's like the therapist is walking, you know, in front of you and walking in front of you and just guiding you along so the coinciding support that people receive from csb and be well is whole and complete and cutting be well is like saying you just deserve half an apple half the support half

[01:08:30] the dignity and i've been part of be well for about two years when i oh i'm sorry you're okay If you can just wrap up, that's fine. Oh, sure. Sure. I just wanted to also say that cutting B-Wall is built on dignity access.

[01:08:51] And cutting the program might remove services, but it also removes dignity. And it makes us isolated and disconnects us and leaves us alone. And I'm asking today that you please support the renewing of the contract for HopeLink with CSB and show us that we matter to Fairfax County and that we do belong because we are all community and we want to live and thrive just like you and just like everyone else.

[01:09:23] And thank you so much for your time and I'd love to submit the rest of my speech. Sure. Thank you. Thank you, Rachel. Thank you very much. Speaker number 17 is Becca DeDirt, to be followed by Mary Great Pios and Breen Ahmed. Let me ask if Becca's on the line.

[01:09:39] Becca, can you hear me okay? Yes, can you hear me? Yep, welcome. Beautiful. Thank you so much. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the board. My name is Becca DeDirt, and I am speaking on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth. CSG's mission is to advocate for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for our region to grow and provide opportunities for all. I will be speaking to housing and transit items in the FY27 budget, which are aligned with joint comments you have already received from Fairfax Healthy Communities. Number one, secure the full two cents for affordable housing. We are very grateful to see the proposed budget include

[01:10:19] three new full-time staff positions for affordable housing. This team is essential to hitting the board's goal of 10,000 new affordable homes by 2034 and continuing the successful model of leveraging county-owned land for the public good. However, FY27 was the deadline for this board to fulfill the commitment of allocating a dedicated two cents of the budget to affordable housing. We are currently sitting at 1.25 cents. We are asking for the full three-quarters of a penny increase as promised. This wasn't a suggestion. It was a commitment reaffirmed in the FY26 and FY27 budget guidance. We are also asking the board to reconsider cuts to the Fairfax

[01:10:56] Connector. Frequent and reliable transit is a cornerstone of our economic competitiveness. We strongly urge the Board not to cut funding for the Fairfax Connector and to maintain current service levels. Reducing these services disproportionately harms families and workers who rely on transit as their primary alternative to driving in congestion. Number three, we urge you to identify new funding for active transportation. We appreciate and applaud the Board's prior commitment of \$100 million for active transportation projects over a six-year period.

[01:11:27] These types of investments are critical to the ongoing support of our ever-growing active transportation needs. At the end of FY27, however, these funds will be fully dispersed and new funding must be identified. While at 1L funding sources can help achieve the county's goals, we encourage you to identify a new source of funding for active transportation projects so that these critical investments can continue to be implemented in a sustainable and intentional manner.

[01:11:51] Number four, we urge you to prioritize maintenance of existing infrastructure. In these financially constrained times, we strongly recommend adopting a maintenance-first approach. Our existing infrastructure is crumbling, and a lack of funding for the upkeep of sidewalks and trails creates deteriorating conditions that put residents at risk, particularly in neighborhoods with limited mobility options.

[01:12:14] Taking better care of the investments we already have made prevents more costly full-scale reconstructions in the future. Housing and transit are inextricably linked to the well-being of Fairfax County and its residents. By not sufficiently investing in these drivers, we risk long-term ramifications that even healthy budget years will find difficult to remedy.

[01:12:33] We urge the Board to prioritize this year's budget funds to ensure a diverse, connected community for all. Thank you for your time and consideration. Thank you, Becca. Next, we have Mary Great-Pios, followed by Ambreen Ahmed, and then Elizabeth Delaney. Good evening to the entire Board.

[01:12:54] My name is Mary Great-Pios, and I serve as the financial consultant to the David R. Penn Community Center. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the future of the historic David R. Penn Community Center, a building that reflects not just our past, but the values of equity, collaboration, commitment to the community, and innovation that define neighborhood and community services.

[01:13:19] As one of NCS's core value states, we respect, embrace, and actively consider the differences, needs, abilities, and culture of the individuals we serve. In a county as prosperous as Fairfax, it can be easy to assume that funding a historic center is optional, or that funding alone is what has sustained the David R. Penn Community Center.

[01:13:43] But prosperity does not preserve identity. In fact, growth and development can quietly erode the very character that made this community worth investing in originally. We urge you to reconsider the proposed budget cuts to the David R. Penn Community Center.

[01:13:59] The Penn Center has endured for over 122 years because of something deeper, a commitment to community, innovative thinking that has made it just over 900 square feet a vibrant and functional space, and the collaboration of individuals who understand what equity truly looks like in the sideburn community.

[01:14:22] For those unfamiliar with this history, in 1904, David R. Penn and Sarah Penn donated an acre of land where a tent first housed a church. In 1918, that tent was replaced with a building known as Little Bethel Baptist Church.

[01:14:40] It served not only as a place of worship, but also as a school for black children in the sideburn community. Evenings and weekend brought meetings, gatherings, and celebration. In 1973, the Sideburns Civic Association petitioned the Board of Supervisors to establish the David R. Penn Memorial and Recreation Center.

[01:15:00] Funding was approved, and the center opened that same year, and so here we are continuing the legacy. This center is more than a building. It is a living record of resilience, perseverance, and strength. It preserves the stories and shared experiences that connect past generations to those of today.

[01:15:19] Without ongoing support, those connections weaken, and once lost, they cannot be easily rebuilt. We should also be clear, not all county residents are able to afford or access quality programming.

[01:15:35] The Penn Center provides the very principles that Fairfax County government strives to maintain, an inclusive, welcoming space where people of all backgrounds can gather, learn, and engage. As stated in the NCS David R. Penn website, our Youth and Teen in Action after-school program offers youth and teens a structured and engaging environment for 1st through 12th graders.

[01:16:00] The program provides supervised enrichment and socioeconomic learning activities, including arts and crafts, STEM programs, life skills, service projects, recreational games, and much more. Participants also are provided a nutritional balanced meal each day.

[01:16:19] The Penn Center provides the very principles the Fairfax County government strives to maintain, an inclusive, welcoming space where everyone of all backgrounds can gather, learn, and engage. Adults and seniors have also benefited from programming at the Penn Center, including bridge, self-guided computer activities, table games, arts and crafts, and crocheting.

[01:16:44] While it may be convenient to merge senior programming, but the Mott Center, Mott Community Center, it is worth asking whether such a change truly serves those who have grown accustomed to the staff, accessibility, camaraderie, and close-knit nature of the familiar group and location.

[01:17:03] Penn is a center where face-to-face connection still matters and where technology supports rather than replace human interaction. The center is a hidden gem for families, offering safe, structured programming with immediate availability, often filling gaps where nearby schools have long wait lists.

[01:17:24] One parent recently shared that family members came to the Penn for their child's first birthday, and years later, they are still part of the Penn Center. It is also a space for true collaboration. The Congregation of Greater Little Zion Baptist Church has partnered with Penn on numerous occasions since its inception.

[01:17:44] with both Penn and the church sharing space to support dance classes, youth programming, and fraternity and sorority meetings. Many founding members of the Cyber and Civic Association were also members of Greater Lausanne, further strengthening the longstanding community ties.

[01:18:08] And while the cuts may seem to offer short-term savings, the long-term costs, the lost programs, and weakened relationships, Diminished engagement will far outweigh any immediate gain. It is far more responsible to sustain what is working than to attempt to rebuild it.

[01:18:25] I urge you to continue supporting the David R. Penn Community Center, not out of obligation, but out of recognition that preserving our past is an investment in our future. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this historic center. Thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony.

[01:18:42] We're on speaker number 19, Ambreen Ahmed. And speaker number 19 here, Ambreen, oh, I was on the phone. Yes, can you hear me okay? Yes, yes, I can. Thank you very much. Good afternoon. May God's peace and blessings be upon you.

[01:18:59] My name is Ambreen Ahmed, and I'm the founder of Rise and Rebuild, a nonprofit organization dedicated for supporting survivors of domestic violence. I stand before you not only as an advocate, but as a survivor myself.

[01:19:17] My journey has shaped my purpose, and for over 30 years, I have worked in the field of domestic violence to support others on their path to safety and healing. I'm also a proud member of Council to End Domestic Violence, a collaborative effort here in Fairfax County that brings together government agencies and nonprofit organizations with one shared mission, to protect and empower survivors.

[01:19:54] Through this collaboration, we have built critical programs that serve as lifeline for those in crisis. These include the Domestic Violence Action Center, the Supervised Visitation and Supervised Exchange Center, the Bachelors Intervention Program, Trauma Counseling Services, and the Tier 1 and Tier 2 trainings that educate our community about the deep and lasting impact

[01:20:27] of domestic violence. These programs did not appear overnight. They were created through years of listening, listening to survivors, understanding their struggles, and identifying the gaps in services. Together, we asked, what do survivors truly need to feel safe, to rebuild, to strive?

[01:20:58] And because of that work, Fairfax County now has a network of support that helps survivors not only escape violence, but begin again with dignity, with strength, and with hope.

[01:21:15] But our work is not done. Every day, survivors still face barriers. Here, lack of resources and uncertainty about where to turn. The services we have built are essential, but they need continued support, investment, and commitment to grow and reach those who are still suffering in silence.

[01:21:44] Today, I ask you to stand with survivors, support these programs, advocate for their continuation and expansion, because when we invest in survivors, we invest in stronger families, safer communities, and a more compassionate society.

[01:22:08] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. I just need to, I have one more line. Your time has expired. Please, if you have one sentence, wrap up quickly. Yes. Okay. Your support has the power to save and change lives. Thank you for your time, your compassion, and your commitment. Thank you.

[01:22:28] Thank you. We're on speaker number 20, Elizabeth Delaney, to be followed by Gail Vass, Deborah Graves, and Darren Marquardt. If I called your name, please come on down close and be ready to testify. Welcome, Elizabeth. Thank you. Chairman McKay, Board of Supervisors, particularly Mr.

[01:22:49] Harrity, whose district I live in. Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Delaney. I'm not here representing any group, just myself and probably other families like mine. To explain my perspective on the budget, I'd first like to share a little bit about my family. My husband was born and raised in Fairfax County. He grew up in his family's hardware store, Fairfax Hardware, which his father owned and operated in Fairfax for more than 50 years. He later served in local law enforcement

[01:23:22] and retired after a 30-year career. I moved to Fairfax in 1985 and spent my entire professional career with the county's Child Protective Services. I retired too after 30 years. We raised our two children here. They attended Fairfax County Public Schools, went on to college, and ultimately chose to return to this community to raise their own families. We feel incredibly fortunate that they live close enough to us that we can see our grandchildren as often as we like. Like many

[01:23:59] parents, we were actively involved in the community while raising our children. My husband served for many years as an officer and president of one of the county's largest youth sports leagues, FPYC, and I was deeply involved in the schools as PTA and Athletic Booster President.

[01:24:18] In retirement, we have continued to stay engaged. My husband is a longtime member of the Fairfax Host Lions Club and volunteers pretty regularly on fall Friday nights as part of the chain gang at Centerville High School football games. I support several local charitable organizations with both my time and resources, and I jump at the chance to volunteer or chaperone any of my grandchildren's school activities when they ask me, like the younger ones. We recognize that we are lucky. We are fortunate. We have stable

[01:24:53] pensions, thank you Fairfax County, and retirement savings. However, if property taxes continue to rise at their current pace, we may no longer be able to afford to remain in Fairfax County. We could find ourselves facing the same difficult decision as many of our friends and former colleagues, relocating to a more affordable outlying community.

[01:25:18] If that happens, we would certainly feel the loss, but I believe the community would feel it as well. My central point, and really the point I want to make, is we are not unique. We are not special. There

are many residents like us, long-time members of this community, who have contributed for decades and are now living on fixed incomes.

[01:25:41] Today, and I know this sounds hard to believe, but we set aside more each month to pay our property tax than we did to pay our mortgage. I respectfully ask that you keep residents like us in your thoughts and mind as you make decisions about the budget and property taxes.

[01:25:59] Thank you for listening to me. I know what difficult decisions you have to make. I once stood at this podium begging you not to cut my social work staff numbers when I worked for Child Protective Services. So thank you for your service as well. Thank you very much. Speaker number 21 is Gail Vass. Is Gail Vass here?

[01:26:20] Okay, great. Deborah Graves, Darren Marquardt, and Molly Sullivan. Please be ready to testify. Welcome. Hello, my name is Gail Vass. This is Wanda Banks, and I'm here to address the issue that the program that Wanda really has benefited from is the Rebuilding Together project for disabled and elderly to help so they can participate in the community.

[01:26:53] And this group of people were wonderful. They came with a yard full of volunteers to rescue Wanda. What happened is she had broken one ankle, and that wasn't enough. She had to break the other ankle, too. And so she was unable to go up and down stairs.

[01:27:09] She couldn't get out of her home. Wanda had been a resident of Fairfax County 55 years and had been a computer programmer throughout her career and now found herself in the house and couldn't get out. Rebuilding Together came to the rescue, and we said, all we want is just a ramp out the front door just so we can get to the car.

[01:27:27] And they stood back and said, you know, you've got a unique situation here. Your front porch is about the same height as your driveway. We can build a bridge over from your front porch to your driveway with side rails three feet wide, and you have a runway.

[01:27:43] We call it the Freedom Bridge. And so they built this Freedom Bridge, and it was the most magnificent thing, and a little platform at the end of it. I could just back the car up, and Wanda could just take a wheelchair out, get right in the car, and go. No longer does she have to stay in the house because she was housebound for a long period of time.

[01:28:01] Yeah. It's been wonderful. Every morning, you've got to go out and walk. She walks the Freedom Bridge. She's using a walk on the end, getting back up on her feet and walking again. Gives her an opportunity to be able to do that. She couldn't do it before.

[01:28:17] This program, Rebuilding Together, I mean, it's just completely changed her life. I was trying to push her up and down these little ramps, and I've given out. I'm an RN, and I just had too many miles on me.

[01:28:35] I couldn't push it anymore. Sometimes trying to get her into the car, I'd have to flag down an Amazon truck or a trash truck or something to get some guys to come over and help us get her in and out of the house. So it's just made the most difference in her life and mine to be able to have these people come.

[01:28:53] And they were wonderful. They had just a yard full of volunteers coming from a church, and they put up a tent, and the ladies were carrying the wood over to the men. men were cutting the wood the

teenagers were putting the wood to the side and nailing it up and and they worked in the front yard and it was just the most magnificent thing to see they were just wonderful giving people um and we need to support this kind of i understand there's a lot of a lot of projects to support and um and been humbled by that but certainly this one um i can speak for that it's well needed and please give it some more consideration thank you thank you

[01:29:30] very much. Thank you both for coming. We will not forget the Freedom Bridge. Thank you. Yeah, there you go. Speaker number 22 is Deborah Graves, to be followed by Darren Marquardt and Molly Sullivan. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Supervisor Stark. This is Mike Luss, Chairman McCain, the members of the Board of Supervisors, and of course, County Executive here um we appreciate this opportunity to speak in front of you all today from gum springs the

[01:30:08] community which is the oldest african-american community in fairfax county and our community proudly serves the example of african-american ingenuity and strength in the county of fairfax and the state of virginia we are not just a community of the past established in 1833 by west ford an enslaved man but one of the few african-american communities remaining in the county, state, and country, and we plan to remain fortified and thriving county for the generations

[01:30:38] to come, which brings myself, Deborah Graves, Vice President, Gina Jackson, President on behalf of the Gum Springs Community Center Advisory Board, Linda Brown, Vice President of the New Gum Springs Civic Association and President of the Christians in Action for Positive African-American men Dan Moon who is the treasurer of gum Springs Youth Athletic Association member and member of the gum Springs Civic Association and the gum Springs Historical Society and the entire gum Springs community which is the reason why we stand here before the Board of Supervisors and Brian Hill to plead our

[01:31:17] case we go resolve excuse me regarding the proposed budget cuts that will significantly affect our communities gum Springs communities and the center it It is our understanding that the proposed cuts will result in the community center losing one of our assigned directors as proposed to merge two directors into one position.

[01:31:40] Therefore, Mr. Terrence Trent, who is the current director, one of the directors at Gunsprings, will potentially lose his current position that he has held for the last eight years. In the spirit of transparency, Mr. Trent had to leave the county for financial reasons, And ultimately, he returned to the county.

[01:32:01] I actually sat on the interview board. I was excited that not only did he interview, he was rehired, and he's done great things since then. So, because I see that our time is going.

[01:32:19] We, Mr. Tran has returned. It's a long relationship. And he is and continues to be a positive African-American mentor, far figure, and big brother. especially for our seniors, our seniors, okay? And I'd like to put this in here that he was very viable to projects and programs at our center with our lady Fairfax, Maddie Palmore.

[01:32:46] May she rest in peace. Thank you all for allowing me to come before you for about two minutes, because I'm pretty fast. Good afternoon, Mr. Jeff McKay, chairman of the board, my own, I must recognize, My own Van Stark and also Rodney Lusk, the executive there.

[01:33:10] This won't be long, it's real simple. To Chairman McKay and the board, the reason we are here today has been stated before me prior to my coming here. We feel very strongly about requesting the Board of Supervisors to reconsider the proposed budget cut that will significantly affect the gun springs community future we all know that consistency and longevity is the key to trust

[01:33:46] we've got two parts of this community here well we've got three but when we're talking about youth and seniors those are the weakest part of our community and we must protect them to date since the late evan right king and the late virile slaughter terence trent is the only director that has actually been there for over five years.

[01:34:10] Mr. Trent is qualified and he has demonstrated and he continues to demonstrate his leadership skills at Gum Springs Community Center off the Route 1 corridor. As I take my seat, let me just tell you this.

[01:34:26] For an individual who have been in those positions from the flow up to the top, you know, from seniors to the little kids and the teenagers and the assistant director, I'm going to ask you to reconsider letting Terrace Trent go.

[01:34:41] He is detrimental to the future down there. Thank you for hearing me. Thank you. Again, Gina Jackson, President of the Advisory Board. I just wanted to say that we're very thankful that you're hearing us out. Furthermore, therefore, we stand here today representing our Gum Springs community and center.

[01:35:01] Before you all wish to request to reconsider the proposed budget, cut would result in Mr. Trent losing his position as a human development specialist for director, providing continued support for the children, teens, adults, and family programs. Mr. Trent is established. He's a pillar of the community. Currently, we have circulated a petition to further support our plead on Mr. Trent's behalf being signed by the participants at our community Center, Spring Garden Apartments, and the greater Gum Springs Community. Overwhelmingly, I'm confident

[01:35:40] that getting folks to stand for Mr. Trent will not be a difficult task as he is loved, admired, trusted, and respected at Gum Springs Community Center, and we are prepared to make sure that he remains a part of our center. To assist in us in tasks preparing our future generations of children and teens, partnering with our young parents and mentoring our young adults, and providing support as a favorite son to our seniors, a.k.a.

[01:36:09] teenagers. Overwhelmingly, this is a two-way street for Mr. Trent as he supports the teenagers. They also reciprocate to him, particularly because Mr. Trent's own mother recently had transitioned. I know our time is over, so thank you in advance for your consideration.

[01:36:30] Thank you. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. So we're on speaker number 23, Darren Marquardt, to be followed by Molly Sullivan, Jordan Vakan, and Matthew Lofgren. Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Directors or Supervisors.

[01:36:47] My name is Darren Marquardt. I'm the Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons. I am also a former member of the Fairfax Area Coordinating Council for Aging and Adults with Disabilities. While that council is no longer moving forward in the same way, many of its members have regrouped and we have formed the Disability and Aging Coalition.

[01:37:10] I, as a private citizen organization, I'm here today both in my professional capacity and as a part of this new coalition. I want to begin by thanking the county executive for maintaining key investments in human services during a very challenging budget year.

[01:37:27] We support continued investments in affordable housing and health and human services contracts, which are essential to maintaining the network of supports that so many of our residents rely on. I'd like to focus my comments on a few specific areas where proposed reductions will have a direct and meaningful impact.

[01:37:48] First, the reduction of meals on wheels from 11 meals to 5 meals per week. This is not simply about food. It is about nutrition, but more importantly, it's about safety checks, and it is also about human connections for seniors who may otherwise be isolated.

[01:38:06] Second, the reduction of the Rebuilding Together Home Repair Program, which allows low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities to remain safely in their homes and avoid more costly institutional care. Third, the move to make the Golden Gazette online only.

[01:38:26] I'd like to share a brief example. At the NVRC, we host a group called Happy Hands. This is a group of deaf seniors. It's about 50 to 100 folks that come and meet at my office once or twice a month. We provide printed copies of the Gazette. Every time they come in, the Gazette is gone.

[01:38:45] Now, part of that is because many of these seniors don't regularly access technology. If they have a phone, it's not a smartphone, and they use it for maybe texting or a video call only. While many materials, for example, my organization shares, even basic announcements, we have to hand deliver paper copies to them.

[01:39:05] These are active, engaged Fairfax County residents, but they're not able to reliably access information online. For them, printed information is not optional. It is essential. Fourth, the elimination of the health department's speech and hearing program.

[01:39:24] In Northern Virginia, over 200,000 people, including myself, are deaf or hard of hearing. Hearing loss affects one in three adults over age 65 and three of four adults over 75. While the budget suggests that the school-based program may help fill this gap, Those programs do not serve the older adults I'm talking about today.

[01:39:49] Without communication access, people face real risks, missed medical information, loss of independence, and increased social isolation. The county has already recognized social isolation as a critical issue, including through the recent CCAAD pilot effort focused on that very topic.

[01:40:10] For many low-income residents, this program serves as a true provider of last resort. Eliminating it is in the wrong direction. And finally, I'd like to ask you to consider the impact of eliminating the kinship support services, which provides critical support to grandparents and relatives raising children and keeps families stable.

[01:40:34] Now, these are relatively small investments in the context of the overall county budget, But they have outsized impact on safety, independence, and dignity. I urge you to prioritize these areas and continue to invest in the programs that allow people to remain connected, supported, and living independently in the community.

[01:40:59] Thank you for your time and your leadership. Thank you. Speaker number 24 is Molly Sullivan, to be followed by Jordan Vakan, Matthew Lofgren, Courtney Massey. Welcome, Ms. Sullivan. My name is Molly Sullivan, and I'm the PTA President at Liberty Middle School.

[01:41:16] I'm a resident of the Sully District, and I teach at a Springfield District elementary school. First, I'd like to thank the Board of Supervisors whom I've spoken with directly at your town halls, phone calls, and events. Thank you to Supervisor Alcorn, Bierman, Herity, Sizemore Heiser, Smith, and Stork. I appreciate your willingness to listen, and special thanks to those of you who've had really collaborative conversations with me.

[01:41:36] If I haven't spoken with you directly, it actually means that there's an email in your inbox, or that I've tried many times, and your assistants are really good at their job and not letting people through. Each of you are tasked with the impossible of making dollars appear from thin air and people gripe about taxes over and over. Newsflash to everyone listening, and especially those people in the yellow T-shirts who've complained about no taxes.

[01:41:56] You cannot have a strong social network, community, and safety without taxes. And we're stuck here in Fairfax County with things like Dillon Rules, which don't allow us to do anything else to pay for public funds other than things like taxes. All the programs here that you're begging for, et cetera, to save, all of those are paid through those services.

[01:42:11] So please, before you admonish these people up here about taxes, remember everything comes at a cost. Take your fight to Richmond and change the laws. Luckily for you all, I am here with a budget neutral ask today. I'm asking that you reverse your decision to fund middle school after school programs through the FCPS transfer and put it back into neighborhood and community services, as it has been for about 19 years now.

[01:42:31] Once you transfer money to FCPS, we all know that you have no control over how or where it is spent. I have heard the line "good faith" mentioned over and over in reference to Dr. Reed and her team that have said that they will run these programs, but what kind of good faith can we have when just last year there were at least two examples of dissipation of funds that I know of personally. First being Dr. Reed's personal security detail, and the second being the doubling of the school board assistant positions totaling over two million dollars from the school budget last year. I do not recall seeing those line items last year in the school budget, and has anyone else? No, because they were not there. Shockingly, the School Board did not bring either of those changes to the budget before voting

[01:43:09] on it. Those actions violated up to three Virginia Codes: Virginia Code 2.2-3700, which is Virginia FOIA; Virginia Code 22.1-93, Virginia Public School Budget Law; and Virginia Code 33.2-73, which is Virginia School Board meeting procedures. Supervisors, are you not filled with the same frustration and resentment as parents when the money in your budget transfer is being taken away from children and teachers, yet year after year FCPS comes and asks you to put money into teachers and children. I am sure none of you are comfortable with the violations of the Virginia Code. To all of my fellow teachers who are frustrated about cuts and if the funds of the county, if the funds the county actually transferred went the way that FCPS presents it, we could

[01:43:46] actually prevent de-staffs and have the support that we need to teach all children in Fairfax County. Telling family supervisors in your newsletter budget cuts and emails that you're fully funding the middle school after school programs when changing how the transfer has been done for its entire

existence and how you have protected that mis excuse me how you have protected that money from misuse and abuse by fcps is misleading at best did you know that there is currently not a single line item in the fcps budget which matches msas after you've heard all of these talks right you've had meetings negotiations you've gone back to the table repeatedly suddenly and somehow the msas funds that you have allocated disappear when it comes

[01:44:25] to the fcps budget that is a huge problem for me and for the children of fcps I am just really genuinely concerned because Dr. Reed herself told me at Centerville Elementary School this year in an employee conversation that when it comes to MSAS versus special ed or any other number of programs which are more important to her and I understand as a classroom teacher, that these funds are likely not to end up where they say that they will be.

[01:44:48] I have talked to Mr. Hill. He said that there's no accounting or administration issue in moving it back to NCS. So I'm pleased, I'm begging you to protect these funds, which you know year over year are so valued by our county, by our children, and by our families. I would hope that those whose careers have shown that they care most about FCPS like Supervisor Sizemore Heiser and Supervisor Smith, that you will do everything in your power to go back to the table and discuss with your colleagues about moving it back to the NCS fund. I'm telling you right now as a very proud teacher, parent, and community of FCPS that while the schools do a lot that is wonderful and do things correctly, FCPS and Dr. Reed's team unfortunately cannot be trusted with these four million dollars and the kids of Fairfax County cannot yet again be

[01:45:26] victim to failed negotiations and empty promises. If you want middle school after-school programs to end. If you want teens in the streets, and if you want increased gang violence in Fairfax County, then please proceed how you have planned to do, because the MSAS will disappear. However, if you want a better educated, more engaged teen population and safer Fairfax County, then you have to move the funds back to the neighborhood and community service budgets to guarantee that middle school after-school programs continue this year and beyond. Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 25 is Jordan Vachon. Is Jordan here? Speaker number 25,

[01:46:00] Jordan Vachan, Matthew Lofgren, and Courtney Massey, and Mia Ahmed Amato. If I call your name, please come down and testify. And is this, are you Jordan?

[01:46:17] I'm Matthew. You're Matthew. Excellent. Welcome, Matthew. Matthew is speaker number 26. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Matthew Lofgren. I'm here representing Herndon Friends Meeting. We are a congregation that's joined a growing group of organizations throughout Fairfax County who urge the Board of Supervisors to cancel FCPD's contract with FLOC or any other automated license plate reader systems.

[01:46:48] Automated license plate readers, or ALPRs, don't just monitor license plates. They constantly monitor all traffic to uniquely profile every passing vehicle by make, model, color, bumper stickers, or other identifying features. FLOC's algorithm creates a history of every car's movements, which can be accessed at any time by law enforcement without a warrant.

[01:47:11] Most ALPRs are sold by a company called FLOC, although there are other ALPR vendors such as Axon, which FCPD also has a contract with. FLOC cameras have come under widespread criticism by many groups, including the ACLU, for civil liberties violations across the U.S.

[01:47:29] ICE spies on immigrants with them. They've been used to track No Kings protesters. Innocent people and families have been held at gunpoint because of false positives from flock cameras. Police officers have stalked their ex-girlfriends with them, and they've even been used to track a Texas woman getting an abortion.

[01:47:51] From a technical standpoint, flock cameras have abysmal security. Several flock cameras have uploaded raw video footage of joggers on trails, couples at markets, and children at playgrounds, which were accessible without a login. Russian hackers have also accessed flock data.

[01:48:07] So how did we get here? FCPD began using flock cameras in 2023. At the time, it claimed that it does not share information to federal authorities regarding their investigations into immigration enforcement. Nevertheless, reporting from VPM revealed flock audit logs between June 2024 and April 2025, which showed that federal immigration enforcement had indeed accessed flock data for immigration cases in Fairfax County. In fact, over half of all immigration related flock searches in Virginia were taken from footage in Fairfax County. How did

[01:48:46] this happen? Well, in response, FCPD said, quote, we share our license plate reader system with 13 other agencies, end quote. So it's well and fine to say that FCPD doesn't use flock cameras for immigration purposes, but we share our data with other departments who share with other departments and all the data eventually ends up in ICE's hands. One way or another, camera footage of our everyday movements spreads across a nationwide network of departments and agencies. Charlottesville City Council member Michael Payne quite reasonably noted, it's a huge problem to have a privately owned company building a national surveillance system of vehicles and vehicle locations.

[01:49:26] Now, Virginia passed a law in 2025 regulating all ALPRs used by law enforcement in the state. So was the problem solved? Unfortunately, no, because police departments broke the law. A few months ago, the Virginia State Crime Commission took a survey of all ALPR camera usage by police departments.

[01:49:45] A third of all departments didn't respond. Of the respondents using ALPRs, 35% haven't promoted public awareness, 16% didn't have an ALPR policy, 21% kept data longer than the max retention period, 13% shared data with out-of-state agencies, 6% shared with federal agencies, and the report didn't say which departments broke the law.

[01:50:04] Further, it didn't indicate that any departments would face consequences for illegally using ALPRs. So this really gets us nowhere. If any Virginia departments are sharing their data with out-of-state or federal agencies, then all Virginia FLOC data is still getting around everywhere.

[01:50:21] And there's reporting from the Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism that shows Virginia police are trivially using FLOC data. Whenever someone submits a FLOC search, there's a required field for the search reason. Thousands of searches have been made in Virginia with one-word justifications like suspicious, or suspect, or even one, two, three.

[01:50:41] That's not a reason. This tech gives no barrier to drag net surveillance. Houston area police were told to be as vague as permissible about why they were using flock cameras, and it's clear that the trend is continuing here in Virginia as well. Other Virginia police departments have canceled their flock contracts, including Charlottesville and Stanton.

[01:51:00] This isn't a left or right issue. It's of deep concern to all types of people for a very obvious reason. Normal, red-blooded Americans don't like knowing their movements can be tracked at any time

without a warrant. Flock cameras are not a good investment for Fairfax County, and I urge the Board of Supervisors to terminate Fairfax County's involvement with any sort of automated license plate reader vendors.

[01:51:24] Thank you. Thank you, Matthew. We're on speaker number 27, Courtney Massey. Is Courtney Massey here? Folks, I've got to be able to be heard here. We're on speaker 27. Are you Courtney Massey? Okay, to be followed by Mia Amato, Jade Nguyen, and Robin Mathewman.

[01:51:45] If I called your name, lots of seats down here close. We don't need to take time to watch folks walk down the stairs. Please come down ahead of time. Welcome. Hello. I live in the Providence District. I'm here today with other members of the Ice Out of Fairfax campaign. We are a group of community organizations and county residents who are deeply aggrieved and furious at the targeting of our own neighbors by federal immigration enforcement.

[01:52:09] So with regard to the FY27 budget, we have three main demands. One, double the funding for emergency rental and food assistance and expand the eligibility requirements for that assistance to include and prioritize loss of a primary supporter or income. Two, you heard about this the other night, fully fund Fairfax County schools where families go to school.

[01:52:31] Three, cancel the FLOC contract, which you just heard about. So these are just some of the ways that you can proactively support residents impacted by ICE terror. I'm going to focus on the first one, emergency rental and food assistance. So of the nearly 11,000 ICE arrests across Virginia in 2025 and the first quarter of 2026, 5,000 alone have been in northern Virginia.

[01:52:53] These are bigger numbers than those coming out of Minnesota and Illinois, even though you hear about those places more in the news. In the past year, many of us in this room have personally witnessed neighbors detained at their workplace, at immigration court, at their check-ins, while running errands.

[01:53:09] And now, faced with devastating loss of income, these families are struggling to make rent, and they're afraid to leave the house. No one should have to live with this level of fear. So the proposed FY27 budget includes around \$11 million total for emergency rental and food assistance. This is not enough, given the size of our county and our immigrant population.

[01:53:27] Given the level of need these ICE abductions have created, we demand that you double this number and broaden the eligibility requirements to include loss of primary support or income because the current requirements focus mostly on the impact of COVID-19, which is still very, very real, but they don't mention loss of a primary earner, which is a common outcome in the wake of an ICE detention.

[01:53:47] So where will you get the extra money? Well, we have some ideas. Number one, you can use some of the unallocated \$23 million in discretionary funds. And number two, this is a hot take. You can take some of it from the cops. The combined proposed budgets for police and sheriff this year are around \$360 million.

[01:54:05] You proposed a \$13 million increase to the FY27 public safety budget, and about \$8 million of that is going to police and sheriff departments. But I heard a police officer on Tuesday night say the department is struggling to recruit staff. Why add more money to a department you can't fill? don't tell me it's a compensation issue when Fairfax County teachers are driving for Uber Eats on weekends and still showing up to do their jobs. Not to mention the fact that in spite of the so-called trust policy, y'all like to

trot out in moments like this, the police and sheriff in this county hold the door wide open for ICE as a matter of professional courtesy. Their words, not mine, at an Anadil community meeting last summer when the cops admitted they wouldn't even run ICE agents' IDs in their system, and they don't even know the difference between an

[01:54:43] administrative and judicial warrant. And these are the people you entrust with public safety? Real public safety means making sure our vulnerable neighbors stay housed and fed so they can avoid encounters with the agencies who criminalize and kidnap them. If you're going to hold the door open for ICE, the very least you can do is better support those left behind. You say you care about immigrants, put your money where your mouth is.

[01:55:00] Thank you. Speaker number 28 is Mia Amato, to be followed by Jade Nguyen and Robin Matthewman. Welcome. Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Mia, and I am also asking the board to stop funding and prohibit the use of ALPRs.

[01:55:18] We already went over what ALPRs are, and I want to talk a bit more about that. There are over 250 ALPRs in Fairfax County. It is almost impossible to go to grocery stores, to school, to work without being tracked by an ALPR. And there are several concerns, as Matthew Lofgren already mentioned.

[01:55:37] One issue is that these cameras are not secure. They don't even require two-factor authentication. They do not require warrants in order to be searched. The software is rarely updated. I have not seen any evidence that shows that flock cameras in particular have been tested and inspected by unbiased third parties to determine their security or efficacy.

[01:55:56] They have proven flock cameras particularly to be easily hacked. This is a national security concern for everyone. Everyone, including all of you, can be tracked. Your commute, your habits, your movements. According to the law, police departments can only share flock data within state departments.

[01:56:14] However, police departments in Virginia have self-reported to breaking this law, according to a survey conducted by the Crime Commission in November 2025. Flock cameras have been used in Fairfax County more than any other county in Virginia to target immigrants. Over 25 immigration-related enforcement searches were conducted in Flock data in Fairfax County between June 2024 and April 2025.

[01:56:38] FCPD spokesman Jesse Katzman said the searches were not conducted by officials of the department because Fairfax police officers are not allowed to choose immigration enforcement as a reason for their search. He also said that FCPD shares their license plate data with 13 other agencies.

[01:56:56] This means that federal government agencies like ICE and DHS may have the ability to search the system directly. So even if we stop sharing data with federal agencies, the federal government can subpoena Block Safety and Atlanta, Georgia, their headquarters, and could get access to our data from there.

[01:57:14] The only thing that can prevent this from happening is if we prohibit ALPR cameras altogether. Charlottesville and Staunton are ending their uses of ALPRs. We need to follow their lead. Surveillance provides an illusion of security, but when data captured by surveillance technology like ALPRs is widely accessible to ICE and DHS, who are known for kidnapping people, separating families, and violence, these surveillance technologies become another tool in the arsenal of weapons used to inflict fear, violence, and oppression on our community. I'd also like to add a comment on data centers. Data centers are using drinking water, not tap water or well water or

[01:57:53] rain water. Fairfax has 20 data centers that are massively depleting our precious resources and raising our energy bills. I am disappointed in the board for approving the sale of 41 acres of land for another data center last month. We must enforce strict environmental regulations that require data centers to be run completely off of renewable energy. I ask you to choose people over profit and stop allowing data centers to use our drinking water and pollute our land. Stop the surveillance of our community by cutting the budget of ALPRs like FLOC. Thank you for your time.

[01:58:22] Thank you. Speaker number 29 is Jade Nguyen. We're on speaker number 29, Jade Nguyen. Welcome. Hi, my name is Jade. I'm an organizer and co-founder of Viet Place Collective. I'm here supporting the budget request for ICE out of Fairfax. I was born in Fairfax County and grew up around here. Growing up here, my mother woke up at five every morning to work at a public school cafeteria. She would make me breakfast and leave me a handwritten note because by the time i woke up to catch the school bus she was already at work preparing meals for other students

[01:59:02] she's dedicated her career to working in public school cafeterias where almost all of her co-workers are immigrant women people who are essential to our schools yet not always protected or supported by our system when i got to college i remember hitting a breaking point she would call me late at night while i was doing homework asking for help writing emails to advocate for better working conditions and pay for herself and for the women she worked with, many of whom don't speak English as their first language. Ultimately, I supported her in joining a union, and when I was helping her make these negotiations, I realized that people who are feeding our students and keeping our schools

[01:59:42] running are also some of the most undervalued and least supported. It's not only cafeteria workers. Teachers and educators in Fairfax County are taking on more and more, some teaching over 100 students as you've heard yesterday while expected to take on roles as nurses mentors and most recently in some school security guards we're witnessing teachers who've taught students in Fairfax County for years get laid off while class sizes stay increasing right now you're deciding whether to fully fund the 138 million requested school budget increased by the superintendent

[02:00:19] at the same time you're considering increasing funding for policing enforcement and surveillance by millions of dollars. That's a choice about priorities. If we truly value the people who care for and educate our students, then our budget should reflect that.

[02:00:42] We should be investing in schools and in the workers who make them run instead of expanding enforcement systems while school staff remain underpaid. We're asking you to fully fund the school budget request as named by the superintendent and invest in fair compensation for our educators and our school staff.

[02:00:59] I also want to echo the demand shared before me. Number one, cancel the FLOC contracts. Other Virginia police departments have canceled theirs, including Charlottesville. Is it really in our best interest to contribute to a privately owned company building a national surveillance system?

[02:01:16] Number two, redirect funds into emergency rental and food assistance for families impacted by ICE detention. These families have lost their mothers and fathers to ICE. We need to make sure that they don't lose their housing and access to food and groceries. The same communities that are feeding and educating our students are holding this county together are the ones who should be supported, not surveilled.

[02:01:42] Thank you, and I yield the rest of my time. Thank you very much. We're on speaker number 30, Robin Matthewman. Robin, welcome. The floor is yours. And she will be followed by, I have a whole new list of speakers here, Annette Batchelor, Lucy Brown, and Pamela McLaughlin.

[02:01:59] I will go through these names one at a time. Please be here when I call your name. Welcome. Thank you. Thank you, everybody, for hearing us. Hello, my name is Robin Mathewman. I'm a Braddock District resident and taxpayer. I'm a retired senior U.S. diplomat.

[02:02:17] I'm a participant of several overlapping efforts to help our immigrant neighbors, and I'm a representative of ICE out of Fairfax. Just this year, I have accompanied six people to ICE proceedings. I've delivered food and baby supplies to 100 families. I attended four immigration court proceedings.

[02:02:34] I used to do that regularly last summer. And I have donated roughly \$3,000 or \$4,000 to immigrants needing help with rent, medical charges, utility bills, and legal costs. I'm here to ask your help. And I'm not going to sugarcoat this. I haven't been speaking to the state level or the federal level.

[02:02:53] When you think about any response to what's happening at the federal level of government, you need to really process, really understand that our federal government is building a paramilitary operation to terrorize and suppress not only our immigrant neighbors, but all of us.

[02:03:09] And this is not for our safety, with their quotas, their cruel private prisons, their criminalization of immigrants who have been here legally for years, their limits on work, and their increasing of costs for these people for every possible service.

[02:03:26] The federal government is purposely trying to make life here impossible for many, many hundreds of thousands of people in Fairfax County. As a result, our whole immigrant community is in trauma.

[02:03:43] This is not about just undocumented individuals. All the children in our immigrant community are impacted, and a good number of them are American citizens. I do think that the police and sheriffs, I do thank them for all they do, but the simple fact is they're not protecting our neighbors from these aggressive policies.

[02:04:05] Maybe the tools that the state government will give us will help, and they need clear guidance from you. But our priority for funding needs to prioritize our immigrant communities.

[02:04:21] And if you can, try to increase the emergency relief for these impacted communities and underfunded schools. It will mean so much to everybody. And most importantly, I urge the board to cancel Fairfax County's FLOC contract.

[02:04:38] It's diabolic. It wouldn't be under normal circumstances. I know that the cameras are useful for finding criminals. But right now, you're just helping create a police state. And I really want to second everybody else's comments on this.

[02:04:56] Thank you. Thank you. We're on speaker number one, Annette Batchelor. Is Annette Batchelor here? Okay. To be followed by Lucy Brown, Pamela McLaughlin, Claudia Benavides, if I called your name, please come down here close and be ready to testify. Welcome.

[02:05:22] Thank you. My name is Annette, and I live in Fairfax County. I'm a participant in the B-Wall program. I'm asked that the Board of Supervisors to protect full funds for B-Wall programs and B-Wall be

beneficiary to every client in the program because it helps you with your goals of staying healthy and be well.

[02:06:02] It can help with foods, addiction, and courage in drinking more water and eating healthy. It also helps you obtain certain things like sugar and sodas. Be well is also important to help avoid diabetes.

[02:06:18] The program also gives clients stability and encouragement in health. It also helps me to stay positive and healthy. If B-Well was reduced on limitations, we would not have the help we need to stay healthy.

[02:06:38] Mental health stability through B-Well helps you to service, have help we need to, no, excuse me, service you need to live in your community. Without B-Well, I'm worried that I will not be able to stay focused or what I need to focus on in my behavior of eating healthy.

[02:07:04] I hope you will make a great decision about this program, and thank you so much for your time. Thank you for your testimony. Speaker number two is Lucy Brown. Is Lucy Brown here? Okay. Pamela McLaughlin, Claudia Benevides, Holly Hazard.

[02:07:21] Please come down close so we're ready when you're ready to testify. Welcome. Hi. I'm not really used to speaking in public anymore,

[02:07:31] but i'm a member of the be well program i wanted to tell you a little bit about people like me we

[02:08:12] die early um i'm 63 and according to like different statistics nih and stuff we die 15 to 20 years earlier than the regular population and the reason for this is multiple it could be medication it could be mental illness itself. It could be stigma because we go to doctors and hospitals and they assume everything's all in your head and it's not. But regardless, me and my friends, we want to live.

[02:08:46] So we're here. So what Be Well does is kind of like peer-supported coaching. If this program works well. What it does, it prioritizes healthy habits of what we can do to actually improve our health, which improves our mental health. So like if we're eating good nutrition, we're more likely to be physically and mentally healthy. It's not really a high cost program, but it has a big

[02:09:19] impact. I think if the program does well, that it could actually reduce health care costs because Because if we have healthy habits, just think of it, like how many people eat chips instead of, like, vegetables, right?

[02:09:34] If we have healthy habits, we're likely to be physically and mentally healthier. It's just kind of a no-brainer. But I'm nervous, so bear with me. A lot of attention is paid on professional care within the mental health community.

[02:09:58] And I'm not knocking that because it's very important. However, just like anybody else with another chronic illness, we need the support of a community of people that understand us. So that's why it's run by peers.

[02:10:16] The peers are our counselors because they've been there, they suffer with some of the same things, and they're doing okay. So it's just like if somebody has cancer, they go to a group where, hey, we navigated this system, we survived it, and we're okay.

[02:10:33] It has more impact. Another thing is it really helps us with, like, we have problems with just affording food these days. So, like, how to make a menu and stuff like that.

[02:10:49] So I'm going to wind up because I'm not used to speaking and I'm way over. Thank you. Just keep in mind that this is actually a really good program that isn't all that expensive, but does have a big impact.

[02:11:04] Thank you so much. Thank you for your testimony. And we're going to take a 10-second break so that we can fix the microphone down here so that our speakers don't have to hold it. So if you could just stand by while we get this fixed. Our next speaker, once we have this in order, will be Pamela McLaughlin, speaker number three, to be followed by Claudia Benevides, Holly Hazard, Brian Thorson, Jeffrey Stewart.

[02:11:32] If I called your name, please be down here close, ready to testify. Welcome. Thank you. My name is Lucy Brown, and I live in Fairfax County. I'm writing as a participant in the Be Well program. I'm asking the Board of Supervisors to protect full funding for the B-Well program.

[02:11:52] The B-Well program is important to me because I participate in the walking group that takes place at Fair Oaks Mall and allows me to socialize and get exercise at the same time. The group has helped me stay regular with my exercise routine and has given me stability.

[02:12:09] Without B-Well, I would be concerned about sticking to my goals, specifically aiming for 10,000 steps per day. I believe Fairfax County should continue investing in the Be Well program because mental health services matter to me. I remember not being able to get out of bed. I remember not being able to smile or laugh. Having mental health services like Be Well helped keep me balanced and moving forward. My last case manager referred me to Be Well because she thought it would help me socialize and meet others who struggle with mental illness.

[02:12:47] B-Well helps get me out of the house and connects me to others. I would not wish depression truly on my worst enemy, and I'm glad and grateful to receive services through B-Well and through the CSB. Please prioritize mental health services and ensure that the B-Well program can continue.

[02:13:06] Thank you for your time. Thank you very much. We're now on speaker number three, Pamela McLaughlin. Pamela here. Oh, you already went. Okay, we got these mixed up. Okay, we got these out of order. That's what I wanted to make sure. So this must be Claudia. Is this Claudia Benavides?

[02:13:24] Benavides. Yes, welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon. Buenas tardes. My name is Claudia Virginia Larcon. I am second generation to a Hispanic, Latin, Persian, and Spanish family. I grew up in a home that was the silent boomer generation, where everybody kept the mouth shut, and respect it. Unfortunately, that has been thrown out the window. Why? I don't know. All I know is

[02:13:56] that I have lost many, and I've lost count, to mental health, to chronic health issues, to suicide, to drug addiction, to alcohol. The reason why I am shaking is because I am going on my 28th year of being clean and sober this August if it was not for my supporters, my ass kickers, who kept telling me that I am worth something.

[02:14:31] Yes, I live with nine different neurological disorders. I live with TED, which is a thyroid disorder, and as well as a diabetic disorder that is destroying my sight. So I am legally blind at night because I cannot drive.

[02:14:53] This is not easy. I just received my benefits for disability, and all I'm getting is \$872 from Social Security, \$61 from food stamps.

[02:15:08] How is a person supposed to live on that amount? Here in Fairfax County alone, one-bedroom apartment is less than \$2,200, not including utilities, internet, phone, and who knows what else.

[02:15:30] So I'm trying to figure out, as a survivor of identity theft, as a survivor of sexual assault, as well as domestic violence, how am I, at a 52, not supposed to be here medically, supposed to live on less than \$100 a month?

[02:15:52] So I'm asking you guys, think about it. Put yourself in our shoes. How would you feel if you had to receive \$1,000 a month, but have to spend almost \$4,000 for everything that you need? Think about that.

[02:16:10] Try to go to sleep. But no, I can't sleep because my mind is going crazy. I stay awake for 17 to 20 hours a day.

[02:16:25] I don't fall asleep till 4, 5, 6, 7 in the morning. Well, that's my time. Thank you for listening. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it. Thank you. Speaker number five is Holly Hazard. I know Holly is here to be followed by Brian Thorson, Jeffrey Stewart, and Lucille Brown. Welcome, Holly.

[02:16:47] Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the board. I really appreciate the time that you're taking to listen to all of us, and I know that we're at the end of a very long three days. As you mentioned, my name is Holly Hazard, and I serve as chair of the Fairfax County Public Schools Adult and Community Education Advisory Committee. I'm here asking for your support for the full Fairfax County Public Schools budget ask, which includes the ACE program. Fairfax County is facing a simple reality. Our economy is changing, workforce demands are shifting, and employers are struggling to find people with the skills that they need to fill jobs. But we have a program that addresses that

[02:17:24] at scale and does it efficiently, and that's been working in Fairfax since 1955. The Adult and Community Education Program is not just a community program, it is a part of the county's workforce infrastructure. ACE works. It delivers results for residents, for employers, and for the county's economy.

[02:17:43] It is not optional. Under Virginia law, school divisions are required to provide adult education programs just as they're required to provide K-12 education. The scope may differ, but the obligations is real. And so the question is not whether Fairfax County offers adult education, the question whether we fund it well enough to meet the needs of our citizens.

[02:18:02] This program is operating at real scale. In fiscal year 2024, ACE recorded 4,500 enrollments in workforce-focused programs like trades, IT, health, and driver ed. That's thousands of residents actively working to improve their skills, their job prospects, and their stability.

[02:18:22] And the economic return is strong. An economic analysis commissioned by this advisory committee this year found that programs like ACE generate between \$3.10 and \$3.90 in economic benefit for every dollar that we spend. That's a great ROI by any measure. For about \$1.3 million in public investment, Fairfax County is leveraging an \$8 to \$9 million program that delivers workforce training, economic mobility, and measurable returns. And this is what should get your attention. Local employers are already putting their own money behind ACE. Nearly half of the

[02:18:57] funding for key workforce programs over about \$539,000 in 2025 alone come from tuition payments from employers on behalf of their students. They are choosing to invest in this program because

it works for them. It helps them train workers, retain employees, and fill jobs they otherwise cannot fill. ACE is also one of the county's most practical tools for advancing One Fairfax. One Fairfax is about removing barriers and making sure residents have access to opportunity. And that's exactly what ACE does. It serves adults who face real obstacles.

[02:19:30] Income, language, prior education, access to training, and it gives them a path forward. Skills, credentials, digital literacy, and language access. These are the building blocks of economic participation. And in Northern Virginia, access is not just about skills, it's also about mobility, as we all know. ACE's Drivers' Education Program alone serves 4,000 to 5,000 people each year. And in this region, transportation can determine whether someone can get a job or keep a job. So this matters. There's also a broader impact that doesn't always show up in budget lines. When adults gain education and stability, their

[02:20:07] families benefit. And when parents are better positioned, whether it's through income, language skills, or confidence, their children are better positioned too. This shows up in our schools, and it shows up in student outcomes. This is a two-generation investment. Now, Now one reality you should keep in mind: access is fragile.

[02:20:25] Even modest increases in cost reduce our participation. Some residents are already priced out. When tuition goes up, enrollment goes down. And when enrollment goes down, the county loses both economic return and equity impact. So the question in front of you is straightforward: do we meet our obligation in a way that actually works or do we do the minimum and accept a reduced impact?

[02:20:46] At a time when Fairfax County is competing for talent, adapting to economic change, and managing limited resources, this is exactly the kind of investment we should be protecting. We must protect it. It's targeted, it's leveraged, and it delivers measurable results. I urge you to maintain the strong funding for Fairfax County Public Schools and for the Adult and Community Education Program in your fiscal year 2027 budget. Thank you so much. Thank you. Speaker number six is Brian Thorson, to be followed by Jeffrey Stewart, Lucille Brown, Megan, and then we have some callers. Welcome. Hello, and thank you for the opportunity to be

[02:21:25] in front of you to advocate. I'm actually here with Holly. We were advocating, obviously, for the ACE program. So my hope here was to potentially raise some awareness with the board. I'm not sure how familiar you are with the ACE program. Holly just did a great job explaining it. Really, it's a small program run out of FCPS. And the opportunities it provides are primarily post-secondary school

[02:21:58] courses and adult high school opportunities. So these are the adult high school or diploma and equivalency options. ACE includes construction trade and apprenticeships, courses in health, medical, business, computer, personal enrichment, driver's ed, and adult ESOL.

[02:22:24] So we get this question a lot. Why does FCPS provide adult education? As Holly alluded to, it is in the Virginia Code, principally Section 22.1-223 and Section 2.2-2043.

[02:22:48] The responsibility for compliance has been delegated to FCPS, and the ACE program is governed by FCPS policy 3510 and Regulation 3513.

[02:23:05] So this is why there is an ACE program. So what are the great things that ACE is doing for Fairfax County? Well, it is providing education and training opportunities for the residents.

[02:23:23] And these opportunities can be second chance opportunities at high school education, or they can be training and entry into specific fields like construction, medical professions, or cybersecurity, for example.

[02:23:42] The additional education and training, of course, leads to job prospects or better job prospects for those that are getting the training. Better jobs usually mean better salaries, which, of course, improves the county tax base.

[02:23:58] So ACE provides a pathway for residents to jobs rather than to social services. Ronald Reagan once said the best social program is a job, and ACE prepares Fairfax County residents for jobs.

[02:24:16] So I'm here to ask the Board of Supervisors for help. The best way to help ACE would be to pass the FCPS full budget. Out of the \$9.7 million that is in that budget, \$8.3 million comes from external sources, which are primarily tuition, federal aid, and state aid, and only \$1.4 million comes from the school operating fund.

[02:24:50] So I guess my time is up. Thank you very much. Thank you. Our next speaker is Jeffrey Stewart, to be followed by Lucille Brown. If you're here, come down close. Megan, and then we're going to go to, we have several callers.

[02:25:08] Welcome. Hello, sir. Hi, my name is Jeffrey Stewart. Be Well has changed my life. It's been my pastime for six or seven years, so I hope it keeps going. I have lost 140 pounds since I've been with Be Well.

[02:25:32] Going to the Food, Mood, and Behavior group, they taught us the discipline to actually get it done and achieve our goals. Anika and Serene have been the best.

[02:25:52] They are great mentors, the best I've ever had. They have been there for us in a special way, so they are a huge part of my support system.

[02:26:09] Thank you for your time and consideration. Thank you. Our next speaker is Lucille Brown. Is Lucille Brown here? Okay. Oh, that was Lucy Brown, signed in here twice. Okay. Megan, at this time, we're going to go to a number of callers.

[02:26:28] Speaker number nine is Megan Breccolone. Can you hear me, Megan? Yes. Welcome. The floor is yours. I would like to request full coverage for the B-Well program, and I would even like to provide some of my own income if necessary.

[02:26:50] I have been part of the B-Well program for three years now, and I was suffering from nine deep seizures, 56 brain waves, and five other different diagnoses before.

[02:27:07] And they have severely helped me progress in my health. My nerves are halfway healed, if not more. And my neurologist reduced my medicine in half.

[02:27:24] So instead of taking six pills per day, I only take three pills per day. And they have also decreased my Lamotrigine medicine and kept my lorazepam medicine at an all-time low.

[02:27:45] And, like, today I got a veggie sandwich with olive oil instead of mayonnaise. And I got lemon ginger drink and coconut milk. And my mom, who is physically disabled from a motorcycle accident, um has um walked and for the first time ever and she um she's eating salmon and cod which she never used to eat fish ever and I used to always have to promote it myself and now I have me um Carson

[02:28:25] and McKenzie helping to promote it and I'm very happy to say my mom's eating fish and I'm very happy that others are being healed by this process too and i'm not saying ace is a bad um program but i'm thinking ace is good for like um germana community college um northern virginia community

[02:28:59] college campus over in fairfax and i think it would be great to conglomerate with them too is that the end of your testimony megan yeah that's the end of the testimony thank you very much. Thank you very much. Speaker number 10 is Fariborz Fatemi. Are you on the line, sir?

[02:29:29] I am. Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, distinguished chairman, distinguished members of the board, Jerry, Jimmy Beerman being my supervisor. My name is Fariborz Fatemi. I'm a 30-year retired resident of Janesville, Fairfax County, over 65 years old, and on fixed income.

[02:29:59] Because of a severe illness, which has affected my eyes, I'm soon recovering. I have asked my beloved wife, Nancy Fatemi, to read the letter of my statement.

[02:30:22] Thank you. I'm Nancy Fatemi. And thank you, distinguished chairman and members of the board, for allowing me to continue my husband's statement. It reads as follows, quote, I received my 2026 tax assessment, showing that they have increased my property assessment by 24 percent.

[02:30:47] Outrageous. Taxes are rising to the level of confiscation. The last time I appealed my assessment, the tax assessor told me, quote, The subject neighborhood is a heavily sought aftermarket, which has become very popular with the high-end builders and individuals who purchase older properties to have them demolished and replaced by bigger homes.

[02:31:12] Having made a good decision almost 30 years ago to purchase my property should not be a reason to be penalized year after year. I have not found oil or gold on my land. My wife and I plan to stay in our home for as long as we have together.

[02:31:29] My supervisor, Jimmy Beerman, and Chairman Jeffrey McKay have heard about this confiscatory problem from me on many occasions, as did former Supervisor John Faust and Supervisor Penny Gross now both retired.

[02:31:45] I deeply appreciate your attention and attempts to find a resolution. That is why I come before you once again to advocate for seniors in the same predicament as I, badly in need of property tax relief. Many states and localities have passed laws to support their seniors, long-term residents who want to stay in their homes, and to protect them from property taxes bordering on confiscatory.

[02:32:13] For example, many states have programs that allow counties to freeze property taxes for seniors, and 10 states limit how much property tax values can increase. Some cap real estate taxes at 3%. The recent changes to update property tax relief for seniors, unfortunately, do not go far enough and do nothing to help situations like mine, and I know many other seniors suffering from the same problem.

[02:32:43] With all due respect, there is no help appealing to the tax assessor and appealing to the Board of Equalizers, which seems to be influenced by developers and the tax assessor's office and in need of reform. The aforementioned are just some ideas, if acted upon, would assist many long-term seniors with their property tax problems.

[02:33:05] Please help. Thank you again. Thank you. Speaker number 11 is Annette Bergsland. Annette, are you on the line? So we were unable to reach Speaker 11 and Speaker 12 asked to be removed from the list. Okay. Do we have Speaker 13?

[02:33:21] We do. And this Speaker 13 is James D. using ASL relay service. Welcome.

[02:33:28] mm-hmm that's more on hold okay no i mean i thought that too yeah the the i think it was

[02:34:10] an apprentice that transferred it to me was kind of like it's a legal meeting and he's about to talk and just dropped me in there and i was like let me call a team because i don't know what's going on yeah i'm not sure what happened there either let me ask um at this time if there's anyone else present here in the auditorium who has not already spoken who would like to speak on this budget. Anyone else who would like to provide testimony in the auditorium that has not already spoken? Seeing and hearing no one, let me ask if there are additional callers. There are no additional callers. There are no additional callers. So at this time, that brings us to the

[02:34:47] end of our public hearing. And I'm going to turn the gavel over to Supervisor Smith so that I can make the following motion. I move that the board close this public hearing while leaving the record open for written testimony until April 28, 2026. 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 the public hearings. I'll second that motion. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing and hearing none, all those in favor, please say aye. Aye. Any opposed? Any abstentions? That motion carries.

[02:35:21] Thank you very much, Supervisor Smith. And with that brings us to the end of our third day of public hearings on April 16th, 2026. I want to thank all those who participated as well as our staff for all their work to facilitate these public hearings. And with that, the board is adjourned.



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