



Fairfax County Alliance for Human Services

FY 2025 BUDGET

AHS PERSPECTIVE ON THE BUDGET: AHS is pleased that the County Executive has sustained and even increased some funding for human services programs that meet the needs of our most vulnerable residents—even while dealing with significant revenue constraints and other budget pressures.

As we said last year and the year before, AHS shares the Board’s concern about the impact of the continuing significant increases in assessments and the resulting tax burden on County residents, both homeowners and tenants. We recognize that the 4-cent Real Estate Tax Rate increase proposed by the County Executive and used to balance the FY 2025 Budget would make that tax burden even heavier.

During the March 5 Board meeting discussion on advertising the Real Estate Tax Rate, members seemed to agree that the proposed 4-cent increase was a prudent starting point, but also expressed the hope that ultimately they would be able to adopt a lower rate.

We are realists as well as advocates for human services, and we recognize that adopting a lower tax rate than the one used to balance the budget is likely to entail budget reductions, since the available balance is only \$3.83 million.

With that in mind we urge the Board to:

- **Make no across-the-board cuts.** Budget reductions should be made thoughtfully and strategically, with robust consideration and understanding of the effects of the cuts.
- **Avoid cuts to health and human services and affordable housing,** including the much needed increased funding in the County Executive’s proposed Budget. Social and economic disparities persist in our community, and our most vulnerable residents are currently experiencing significantly rising rent and utility costs, cuts in benefits, food insecurity—all coupled with underemployment. Cuts in the services they need would make it more difficult for them to thrive and, in many cases, survive.
- **Remember that many County human services agencies are working at capacity,** especially because of recruitment and retention difficulties. Budget reductions could significantly affect access to services for our most vulnerable community members.

Affordable Housing: The Alliance would like to remind the Board that its Budget Guidance for FY 24 and FY 25 reasserted the Board’s commitment to increasing baseline funding for affordable housing. The Board said: “We need to continue to build baseline funding in order to

maintain a long-term funding strategy. The County Executive is encouraged to add recurring resources in FY 2025 with the goal of reaching a total investment of two pennies on the Real Estate Tax rate by FY 2027.”

Although we strongly agree that at least another penny on the Real Estate Tax Rate should be dedicated for the preservation and development of affordable housing, we understand that revenue constraints seem to have made this difficult to do in FY 2025. We therefore urge the Board to include the following items in its Budget Guidance for fiscal years 2025 and 2026:

- Reaffirmation of its commitment to the goal of 10,000 new homes by 2034.
- Direction to the County Executive to add recurring resources for affordable housing in FY 2026.
- Direction to the County Executive to find, wherever possible, substantial one-time funding for affordable housing to be included in the FY 2024 Carryover Budget and in the quarterly Budget Reviews.

Contract Rate Increases: The proposed FY 2025 Budget includes \$13.15 million to support contract rate increases for providers of mandated and non-mandated health and human services and a variety of other programs. The increase is needed, and the Alliance supports it, but, as we said last year, we are also aware that, in many cases, it will not be enough to enable the County’s non-profit partners to maintain the essential services our community depends on. The recruitment and retention issues faced by these organizations are the same as the County’s—if not even more challenging.

The Alliance supports all the health and human services funding in the County Executive’s proposed budget. We highlight the following:

Consolidated Community Funding Pool (CCFP): The General Fund Transfer to the CCFP will be increased by \$644,896, or 5 percent. With this increase and a decrease of \$66,852 in federal CDBG funding, the total CCFP FY 2025 funding level is anticipated to be \$14.4 million, or 4 percent more than FY 2024.

Healthy Minds Fairfax Behavioral Health Navigation (DFS): An increase of \$446,000 in operating expenses will support year two of a two-year phase-in for this program. Service navigators assist families and community members in identifying services for a child, negotiate with providers and insurance companies, and identify tools to help determine the level of service a child needs.

Two New School Age Child Care Rooms (NCS): An increase of \$473,450 and 6 positions will support two new SACC rooms at Louise Archer E.S. in Vienna.

My Brother’s Keeper Program (NCS): An increase of \$250,000 in operating expenses will support a Board initiative for the County to join the My Brothers Keeper Alliance, which focuses on improving outcomes for boys and young men of color.

Health Laboratory (HD): An increase of \$766,564 is included to support positions originally established to accommodate the increased testing requirements necessitated by the Covid

pandemic. These positions were initially fully funded through a state grant with the understanding that General Fund resources would be needed once grant funding expired. These positions will continue to develop and sustain laboratory testing processes, procedures, and protocols essential to the identification of new and emerging public health hazards and threats.

Support Coordination (CSB): An increase of \$2.1 million will fund 7 new positions and operating expenses for the provision of support coordination services to an additional 240 individuals with developmental disabilities as a result of new Medicaid Waivers allocated by the state. The increase is partially offset by an increase in Medicaid Waiver revenue for a net cost to the County of \$1.3 million.

School Readiness: The FY 2025 Budget proposes adding \$1.7 million to Fund 400045: Early Childhood for operating expenses to support early childhood activities, including \$1.3 million to continue the 72 Early Childhood Development and Learning Program slots that were originally funded from a federal Community Funding Project in FY 2024.

Affordable Housing Positions (HCD): An increase of \$563,757 and 5 new positions is included to support the creation, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable housing throughout Fairfax County. This proposed increase reflects the Board's Budget Guidance for FY 2025, wherein the Board recognized that additional County staff support would be needed to use additional affordable housing resources in a timely manner and directed the County Executive to include a recommendation to address the additional workload.

Hypothermia Program (HCD): An increase of \$250,000 is included to provide additional baseline funding to support this program. Support by volunteers and the faith-based community has still not returned to pre-pandemic levels, thus requiring additional funding to maintain the program at current service levels.

Probation Counselor II Positions (General District Court): An increase of \$355,636 and 4 new positions is included to support the Court Services Division of the Fairfax County General District Court. These positions are needed to support the growing number of non-violent offenders experiencing a mental health crisis who are being diverted from incarceration to treatment.

FY 2025 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES STRATEGIC ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES PLAN

Also known as the StAR Plan, it replaced the old HHS Resource Plan last year. Like the FY 2024 version, the new FY 2025 StAR plan depicts only the human services needs and costs for which new funding was requested in FY 2025. It does tell us which items were funded and which ones were not funded, but, because only the needs and services identified by County staff are included, the plan's scope is limited.

Other limiting factors are holdovers from the original HHS Resource Plan, which included only services provided by the County. Since the debut of that Plan in FY 2018, community advocates, organizations, and County staff agreed that a truly comprehensive plan that represented the entire

human services system should include services provided by the community's non-profit agencies, along with the funding needed to sustain them, as well as human services capital funding needs.

While the FY 2025 StAR Plan has been helpful, we are disappointed that, once again, the crucial missing components—services provided by the non-profits and human services capital funding needs—have not been included. This omission limits the usefulness of the StAR as a planning tool for all of us.