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A Learning Center for Children, Youth, and Families

June 12, 2025

Mayor and Members of the Alexandria City Council

City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Madam Mayor and Members of City Council:

On behalf of the Hopkins House Board of Trustees, we extend our gratitude to City Council for commissioning the “*Alexandria Fund for Human Services (AFHS) Evaluation – April 2025.*” The report provides an urgently needed roadmap for aligning public investment with the human services that are most critical to the health, well-being, and upward mobility of Alexandria’s children, youth, and families.

As a nonprofit organization dedicated for more than 85 years to advancing equity and opportunity through early childhood education and workforce development programs in the City of Alexandria, we strongly support all the report’s several recommendations and wish to highlight two in particular:

- **Recommendation 3.2 – Clarify the Most Effective and Efficient Ways to Identify Essential Human Services:** We strongly support this recommendation and urge Council to explicitly include childcare among Alexandria’s “basic needs,” alongside food, shelter, water, and healthcare.

As the evaluation report notes, basic needs “are foundational for health, economic mobility, and quality of life.” Childcare is indispensable to all three. It is the infrastructure that enables parents to work and contribute to the economy while giving children the early education they need to thrive.

Without accessible, high-quality childcare, families — especially low-income households and single mothers — are subjected to considerable financial and emotional stress, and their employment opportunities severely limited. Children fall behind developmentally before they even reach school age. Employers lose productivity, and Alexandria risks long-term harm to its workforce pipeline and economic vitality. Recognizing childcare as a basic need is not only morally imperative — it is smart public policy grounded in evidence and supported by the report’s call for greater clarity around essential services.

- **Recommendation 3.4.1 – Increase the Impact of AFHS Funding:** We concur with the report’s finding that “current funding levels limit the ability of AFHS to meet growing needs.”

We urge City Council to act swiftly to increase the total AFHS funding pool and to work in collaboration with nonprofit partners, including the Alexandria Council of Human Services Organizations (ACHSO), to determine an appropriate multi-year funding trajectory. This recommendation aligns with our own experience as a long-standing AFHS grantee and service provider: *the demand for services is growing, and the complexity of needs — particularly in the wake of pandemic disruptions and economic pressures — requires more than static current services funding.*

We also agree with Mayor Gaskins that while the report values programs described as “novel,” it’s important to note that “novel” does not inherently mean “better.” Novelty may indicate a new or untested approach, but longstanding, evidence-based programs often deliver consistent, measurable outcomes for vulnerable populations. *In the field of human services, where the needs are urgent and resources limited, proven effectiveness should take precedence over innovation for its own sake.* Many longstanding programs provided by nonprofits in Alexandria — including early childhood education, family support, workforce development, and youth services — may not be “novel,” but they are demonstrably impactful, deeply trusted by the community, and critical to the city’s human services infrastructure. Supporting these programs ensures continuity, stability, and results.

Finally, we would like to share that we are particularly encouraged by the report’s recommendation to “continue efforts to increase the racial and economic equity of AFHS investments.” Expanding the fund and clarifying the scope of essential services will ensure that the City of Alexandria not only maintains its commitment to equity but leads by example in investing wisely and compassionately in its people.

We look forward to working alongside the city government, our fellow nonprofits, and community leaders to advance these recommendations and fulfill the shared vision of an Alexandria where every resident has the opportunity to live with dignity, security, and purpose.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees Hopkins House,


JULIE N JAKOPIC
 Chair, Public Policy & Advocacy Committee


J. GLENN HOPKINS
 President/CEO

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