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March 6, 2013

Mayor William D. Euille and Members of the Alexandria City Council  
301 King Street, Room 2300  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Euille and Members of the Alexandria City Council,

The undersigned board members of the Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center wish to respectfully express our concerns regarding the effects of the proposed 2014 City budget on some of our most vulnerable citizens. Objective number 1 in Goal number 2 of Alexandria's Strategic Plan seeks to "[m]aintain and expand essential health and behavioral health services." Under the proposed 2014 budget, most services provided by the City's Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) will not be expanded, and many will not even be maintained at previous levels. One may ask how these impacts differ from those experienced by other City departments. The answer, in our view, is twofold. First, this sixth consecutive year of DCHS cuts reduces direct services to individual people, rather than affecting only infrastructure that, while important for overall "quality of life," only indirectly reduces services to individuals. Second, the cuts disproportionately affect Alexandrians most in need.

Among the 16 positions (12 currently filled) that the DCHS must eliminate in order to align with its reduced budget, a few examples may serve to illustrate our concerns:

- Two full-time positions involving employment training and assistance
- Two full-time Therapist Supervisors and two part-time Residential Counselor positions in the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Residential Services program
- The Detox Nurse position

In addition, cuts by other City departments will adversely affect some of the persons most likely to need (now or later) DCHS services. The Police Department eliminated a Youth Coordinator who works with homeless families and children. The Sheriff's Department eliminated its support for the DCHS position of Senior Therapist for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services at the jail, and reductions by Court Services also are likely to be problematic.

In summary, we ask that as you take a fresh look at the proposed budget, please always give priority to people, not things. We understand that sacrifices are required from all areas of city government

and from all residents, but we ask that the burden on our most vulnerable residents be as light as possible. Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,

Board, Friends of the Alexandria Mental Health Center

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