

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 15, 2018

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A REPORT ON FEDERAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA.

ISSUE: Federal Issues of Interest to the City of Alexandria

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council receive this report.

DISCUSSION: There are a number of issues important to the City drawing attention and/or action at the Federal level. Many of these are of interest to and have impacts for the City of Alexandria and its residents.

Gun Control. Widespread and comprehensive gun control legislation has failed at both the federal and state levels. Despite this ongoing failure, the federal and state governments must continue efforts to combat gun violence and identify solutions that protect public safety while preserving Second Amendment individual rights, including: stronger background checks for all gun buyers; “red flag” laws to aid earlier identification and court-ordered removal of guns determined to pose a danger to the owner or others; prohibiting the sale of armor-piercing ammunition; and bans on assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and bump stocks. While localities do not have the authority to regulate guns, the opportunity exists for localities to identify and implement creative ways to control them and crack down on illegal weapons.

WMATA Capital Funding. While the WMATA Compact states have worked hard to put together a historic funding package for ongoing, dedicated revenue for Metro, we need to ensure that federal grant money for Metro remains in place when it expires in 2018. Currently, Metro currently receives its \$150 million annual allotment from the federal government under the 2008 Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA). This has been matched on a 1:1 basis by DC, Maryland and Virginia. This program expires in 2018 and needs to be renewed as the federal government is a vital user and partner in Metro funding for the region.

Potomac Yard Metro Station. Borrowing through the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) is a key part of the City’s financing package for this project. It is important to the City that the federal TIFIA program remains in place or is augmented as has been proposed in some of the federal infrastructure funding expansion discussions.

Federal Funding for Housing Affordability. The City has concerns about the proposed elimination of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, HOME Investment Partnerships programs and funding cutbacks in public housing programs. The CDBG program provides communities with resources to help address various community development needs, including funds for localities to provide decent housing, living environments and expanded economic opportunities -- particularly for low- and moderate-income Americans. CDBG funds support many of the needs of Alexandrians to include the operation of the Winter Shelter and security deposit assistance for homeless and/or disabled/elderly residents. Currently, the City receives about \$0.7 million per year in CDBG monies and about \$0.4 million per year in HOME monies.

The President’s 2019 budget includes \$8.8 billion in cuts to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), cuts that would greatly hurt access to and security of housing for the most vulnerable populations. This would have a significant impact on homeless services, Section 8 recipients and public housing residents in Alexandria. In the City of Alexandria, we receive over \$800,000 in HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) funds for homeless services, and ARHA receives significant federal funds to support its public housing programs.

Restructuring of SNAP Food Benefits. The President’s 2019 budget proposes cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) by more than \$213 billion over the next ten years — or by nearly 30 percent. It calls for radically restructuring the delivery of benefits, which would cut benefits for the overwhelming majority of households, and other benefit and eligibility changes that would leave at least 4 million people losing SNAP benefits altogether. The cuts would affect every type of SNAP participant, including the unemployed, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and low-income working families with children.

Sanctuary Cities/Immigration Enforcement Mandates for Local Governments. The issue of “sanctuary cities” and immigration enforcement mandates for local governments is one of concern for many localities, including the City of Alexandria. The City already complies with all existing requirements under federal law, such as the determining the legal status of those in custody at the City Detention Center. However, the City opposes any expanded federal efforts which would require local law enforcement officials to enforce federal immigration laws. The City believes we have the right and the responsibility to use its resources as it sees fit, and that the administration/Federal government should not conscript state and local officials to carry out federal immigration policy.

Medicaid Expansion. The City has continually supported Medicaid expansion in Virginia under the Affordable Care Act to include all individuals with incomes up to and including 133 percent of the federal poverty index. The federal government would absorb the vast majority of the cost for this expanded coverage. Localities would realize some cost savings in the area of

uncompensated care as well as increase access to healthcare services for those Alexandrians who are part of the 300,000 Virginians who would be eligible for Medicaid under expansion.

The “dual track” Medicaid expansion approach Virginia is working to include in the 2018-2020 biennial budget would require the State to ask for federal approval of an amendment to the State Medicaid plan to expand eligibility to people earning up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level, or less than \$17,000 a year. The State would also apply for a Section 1115 waiver with requirements for recipients that would include work, training, education or public service.

Approval of these waivers by the federal government is likely but with the potential for sweeping changes to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act at the federal level, there could be potential impacts to the state and localities. The City realizes that efforts may continue in Congress to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. The City does not support these efforts, and will carefully monitor any effects they may have at the State and local levels.

STAFF: Sarah Graham Taylor, Legislative Director