



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 18, 2024

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER /s/

FROM: KATE GARVEY, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND HUMAN SERVICES

DOCKET TITLE:

Consideration of the Release of the \$900,000 from FY 2025 Contingent Reserves for Mental Health Staffing Stabilization.

ISSUE: Consideration of the Release of the \$900,000 from FY 2025 Contingent Reserves for Mental Health Staffing Stabilization.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council approve the proposed use of \$900,000 held in FY 2025 General Fund contingent reserves to enable the implementation of strategies to achieve Mental Health Staffing Stabilization. These strategies include the increase in compensation for Mental Health staff, the offering of recruitment incentives for incoming staff, the engagement of an outside firm to assist in targeted recruitment and the appointment of a temporary administrative staff member to assist in key elements of the internal hiring and onboarding processes.

BACKGROUND:

As directed by Council, the department has developed strategies to respond to issues related to competitive compensation, delayed hiring processes, and effective recruitment that were identified during the budget process. As identified in the Budget Memo response published on April 2, 2024, there were 64 vacancies out of the 301 direct service positions and 128 mental health professionals left the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) since calendar year 2022. Also identified in the memo were the disparities of salaries regionally, with the average gap reaching \$20,000. In response to these identified challenges, City Council assigned \$900,000 in Contingent Reserve for the purpose of mitigating these issues and reducing the ongoing vacancy rates of the DCHS Mental Health positions.

DISCUSSION:

To effectively address the number of vacancies in Mental Health positions in DCHS, it is necessary to carry out a multi-pronged comprehensive approach. The most critical area identified is providing competitive salaries for mental health staff. To begin the process, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) did a review of the Senior Therapists and Therapists Supervisor salaries in comparator jurisdictions and determined that they were below market. In response, an increase of one Grade was recommended for each position, with Therapists moving from Grade 21 to 22, and Supervisors from Grade 22 to 23. Because these increases would cause salary compression with the supervisors and managers who are responsible for the oversight and leadership of the mental health services, a full review of the Steps and Grades for those positions is necessary. This will be completed by DHR, and it will involve a total of 103 mental health positions. This review will inform the recommendations for any additional increases.

Approach:

The strategies to address the mental health vacancies and recommendations for the use of the funding are as follows:

- Estimate of increased compensation for 103 Mental Health positions.
- \$3,000 signing bonus for Mental Health positions (25 per year).
- Dedicated administrative support position to expedite hiring process.
- Contract a firm for targeted recruitment of Mental Health positions.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is \$900,000 currently held in FY 2025 general fund contingent reserve for this purpose and therefore there will be no additional impact to the City's operating budget. Authorization by the City Council will increase the DCHS general fund budget in the amount of \$900,000.

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