



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** FEBRUARY 19, 2026

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**THROUGH:** JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER

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

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Authorization to Accept a Grant Award from the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund to Enhance and Expand the Department of Community and Human Services' Economic Mobility Work.

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**ISSUE:** City Council's authorization to accept a two-year Financial Empowerment grant from the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund to enhance and expand the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) Center for Economic Support (CES) economic mobility work.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** That City Council:

1. Authorize the acceptance of a Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund grant award to DCHS in the amount of \$170,000, which will extend through April 30, 2028.
2. Pursuant to the grant, approve the establishment of an Office of Financial Empowerment within DCHS' Center for Economic Support. The office will enable a strategic, coordinated, and sustainable approach to ensuring economic stability and upward mobility for all Alexandrians; and
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents required.

**BACKGROUND:** On September 16, 2025, the Cities for Financial Empowerment issued its Cohort 4 Financial Empowerment Cities notice of funding availability. DCHS staff learned of this grant opportunity on November 7, 2025, with a submission deadline of November 14, 2025. Staff sought and received the City Manager's approval to submit a grant application. As per the terms of the grant application, Mayor Gaskins subsequently provided a letter of support that accompanied the grant application. In mid-December 2025,

DCHS staff participated in an interview with the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund to further explain the DCHS' vision and commitment to financial empowerment and economic mobility. The intent-to-award notice was received on January 13, 2026.

Cities for Financial Empowerment funding includes two years of significant technical assistance, as well as cohort-based assistance from other municipalities' awardees.

**DISCUSSION:** The acceptance of this grant would enable DCHS, through the Center for Economic Support, to plan and establish an Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) to align and strengthen existing services, maximize the impact of public and private investments, and deliver measurable results for residents most affected by economic disparities. This approach directly supports the City Council's priority of reducing community disparities by aligning programs, funding, and outcomes to close gaps in economic opportunity. The OFE will be operated by the Economic Mobility Officer, who will leverage partners, interns, and volunteers as necessary to accomplish the priorities.

The inclusion of an Office of Financial Empowerment in DCHS' program and services portfolio will be the culmination of years of thoughtful, strategic work and will build on investments the City has made in residents' stability, such as ARISE, the guaranteed income pilot, and the annual Tax Preparation services. The office will provide an important platform within DCHS and the city, sending a clear message to residents and community partners that the city remains a partner in taking bold action in the face of continuing economic threats to residents' stability. The Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund grant will allow the newly established Office of Financial Empowerment to:

1. Act as facilitator for residents' access to existing programming, such as financial literacy classes and free tax preparation services, as well as an incubator for future programming, built in response to resident feedback, emerging needs and trends, local, quantitative data, and strategic plans.
2. Improve the ability to partner with residents experiencing financial instability to identify service gaps, co-create solutions to emerging challenges, and scale and adapt effective services across neighborhoods.
3. Create a central hub to deepen existing, city-wide, cross-sector collaboration to focus on identifying and addressing current systemic barriers to stability and upward mobility and co-create solutions with city staff and community partners.
4. Complement the existing financial crisis resources housed with DCHS's CES, allowing for an economic mobility mindset and coaching to be embedded and establish pathways to stability and mobility resources.

This work, proposed and approved in the Cities for Financial Empowerment grant application, is consistent with the City Council's priority to reduce community disparities. The Funding and associated technical support will enable DCHS staff, community partners, and residents to work together to understand, build, and co-create systems and solutions that work for people most impacted by instability.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The \$170,000 grant award extends through April 30, 2028, and requires a \$120,000 match. The match is provided through the salary of DCHS's Economic Mobility Officer. The current budgeted amount for this position exceeds the required match and is an allowable match source; therefore, no new funds are requested or required to meet the match requirement. Throughout the grant period, DCHS will be responsible for the administrative costs associated with the grant, including financial oversight and reporting.

Grant funding will be used for programming, training, and supplies/materials.

**ATTACHMENTS:** None.

**STAFF:**

Alethea Predeoux, Deputy City Manager

Lesa Gilbert, Director, Center for Economic Support, DCHS