

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Kerry Darragh <KDarragh@thehorizonfoundation.org>
Sent: Tuesday, April 18, 2023 4:03 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Budget Testimony
Attachments: FINAL - County Council - FY 2024 Capital Budget Testimony - April 18 Hearing.pdf; County Council - FY 24 Capital Budget Letter - Streets for All Coalition.pdf

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Good afternoon,

Please see attached for two pieces of testimony for tonight's capital budget hearing – one on behalf of the Horizon Foundation, and another letter on behalf of the Streets for All Coalition.

Thank you!

Kerry Darragh

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County Council Hearing – April 18, 2023

FY 2024 Capital Budget: Funding for complete streets and new Howard County Lakefront Library

Position: Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

While we have made progress in investing in local public health efforts in recent years, much more work remains. We urge you to prioritize funding in this year's budget to promote the health and well-being of our residents and advance racial equity in our community.

Protect historic funding for complete streets

We thank you for your partnership in recent years to increase funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects to historic levels. With your commitment, the vision of complete streets has come closer to reality, making it easier and safer for residents to walk, bike, use their wheelchair and use public transportation. We urge you to reaffirm the County's commitment to our shared complete streets vision by protecting the new record \$12+ million for bike and pedestrian infrastructure proposed by County Executive Ball in the FY24 capital budget. This funding will further advance projects along Dobbin Road, US Route 1, Elkridge Main Street, Guilford Road and MD 108 and others – key projects of great need that we enthusiastically support.

While continuing to identify new projects, we also urge you to prioritize implementing and completing projects that have been identified and funded in previous budget cycles. Everyone in Howard County – no matter who they are or where they live – should be able to safely, easily and comfortably bike, walk or take public transportation anywhere they need to go.

Protect funding for the new Howard County Lakefront Library

The Foundation strongly supports the creation of the recently announced Lakefront Library and we urge you to fully fund this endeavor in the FY 2024 budget. The new library will be a civic hub for residents to learn and

for our community organizations to forge new partnerships with one another. In particular, the Foundation is very excited to work with the library as it expands racial equity initiatives. We have been working alongside the Howard County Library System for several years to advance racial equity and support HCLS's racial equity educational programming. With the Lakefront Library's expanded capacity for this work, we will be able to bring new partners to the table, advance the work of our equity grantees and further enable our community organizations to join in these efforts. By strengthening and embracing our cultural institutions like our library system, Howard County can be a model for equitable and thriving communities.

Investing in our public health, advancing racial equity and strengthening community partnerships will help all our residents live long, healthy and vibrant lives. We look forward to our continued work together to build a healthier, safer, more connected and more equitable community. Thank you for your consideration.

Carranza, Amankaya

From: Kerry Darragh <KDarragh@thehorizonfoundation.org>
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2023 10:55 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Budget Testimony
Attachments: FINAL - County Council - FY 24 Operating Budget (Education) Testimony - Mental Health.pdf

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Good morning,

Please see attached for testimony for tonight's operating (education) budget hearing on behalf of the Horizon Foundation.

Thank you!

Kerry Darragh

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County Council Budget Hearing – April 24, 2023

FY 2024 Operating Budget (Education): School-based mental health services

Position: Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

Improving access to quality mental health services in our community has been a top priority of the Foundation's over the last six years. Howard County students face significant mental health challenges, and recent data shows that anxiety, depression, and other mental health indicators are on the rise. At the same time, the inaccessibility of quality, affordable mental health services prevents many students and their families from finding the support they need.

We thank you for your support in recent years to expand school-based, enhanced mental health supports, including 1:1 student counseling services, in the Howard County Public School System. Last year, the county committed to expand these enhanced mental health supports to all 77 public schools by the end of next school year. Work remains to ensure this program is implemented effectively across the county.

We urge you to fully fund mental health providers in the HCPSS budget of 6 social worker FTEs, which will reduce barriers to care so we can ensure all students in Howard County who need help can get it. Everyone in our community should be able to access the mental health services they need – without time or financial barriers or any kind of stigma to prevent them from receiving the support they deserve.

We must ensure these services are available across Howard County Public Schools in an equitable and timely manner. We want every student in Howard County to have all the tools they need to thrive inside and outside of the classroom. When children are mentally well, they are more able to build healthy and successful lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: [Kerry Darragh](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Budget Testimony
Date: Monday, May 8, 2023 8:23:17 AM
Attachments: [FINAL - County Council - FY 24 Operating Budget Testimony - Maternity Care.pdf](#)

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Good morning,

Please see attached for testimony for tonight's operating budget hearing on behalf of the Horizon Foundation.

Thank you!

Kerry Darragh

Senior Communications Officer, Horizon Foundation

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County Council Hearing – May 8, 2023

FY 2024 Operating Budget: Funding for maternity care

Position: Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County's community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

While we have made progress in investing in local public health efforts in recent years, much more work remains. We urge you to prioritize funding in this year's budget to promote the health and well-being of our residents and reduce long-standing health inequities that have prevented many residents – particularly those from communities of color – from achieving good health.

To that end, we ask you to fulfill the County Executive's request for \$1.7 million in funding for the Maternity Partnership Program that was set up last year. This funding will provide important prenatal and postpartum care for uninsured and underinsured mothers in our community. Without sustainable funding in FY24, clinical services will likely end abruptly, leaving pregnant women, mothers and their babies without the care they need. Funding leveraged with the resources within Howard County Health Department is needed to provide a full continuum of care, allowing Howard County to focus on preconception care, screenings and other interventions to reduce the risks of preterm births and maternal complications. Though the state passed the Healthy Babies Equity Act last year to fund pregnant mothers, regardless of immigration status, throughout their pregnancy up to one year postpartum, there have been delays in implementation.

Together with partners with the Howard County Health Justice Coalition including CASA, Alianza Latina, African American Community Roundtable, Chase Brexton, One World Healthcare, Onyx Medical Society and others, we urge you to help fulfill our collective promise to Howard County's new mothers and their families. This funding is critical to help us get this program fully off the ground.

We further urge the Council to make this funding a standing part of Howard County's budget moving forward. The Horizon Foundation stands ready as a committed partner to help make the Maternity Partnership Program a pillar in Howard County for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

From: [Wai-Ying Chow](#)
To: [CouncilMail](#)
Subject: Resident input on County budget discussions
Date: Friday, May 12, 2023 1:08:49 AM

[Note: This email originated from outside of the organization. Please only click on links or attachments if you know the sender.]

Dear Howard County Council and fellow Howard County residents,

My name is Wai Chow and I call Columbia, MD home. I am the mother of a second grader. I am also a researcher with a doctoral degree in child and adolescent clinical psychology, specializing in resilience and prevention. I am writing to express my concern about the historic risks to the psychological well-being of our kids and to urge you to invest in systemic efforts to promote resilience and prevent mental illness.

We in clinical psychology have long known that ½ of lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14. The numbers have gotten worse over time, well before the pandemic. Like so many other societal problems, the pandemic did not create these problems; the pandemic exposed those problems and made them worse.

I realize words like suicide, mass shooting, and overdose can scare people and make people turn away. We don't want to think about something so terrible happening to our kids. We don't want to think about our kids hurting themselves or other people. But we caring adults must face these possibilities, because these are realities unfolding across the country. And most importantly, these realities can be prevented.

As a county, we should invest in scientifically tested interventions that promote resilience and prevent mental health problems. These interventions typically aim to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors for the kids, families, and their communities. Some interventions may not look like what people think of as therapy such as at least 30 minutes of physical exercise, ideally outside, every single day. But these interventions along with those resembling stereotypical psychotherapy can be powerful, sometimes as powerful as medication. These efforts should be set in schools as much as possible to make access to care as easy as possible. These efforts should be universally provided as much as possible to minimize stigma and ensure everyone who needs help receives it. And these efforts should be implemented by additional psychologists, social workers, licensed professional counselors, mindfulness coaches, and other personnel; this should NOT be yet one more hat in the endless stack of hats we compel our educators to wear.

Fortunately, Howard County has many existing strengths when it comes to promoting a shared sense of well-being and community. With additional funding and strategic integration across these strengths, our County could quickly and smoothly implement stronger protections for

child mental health. For instance, daily mindfulness and physical exercise prevents/treats mental health problems and improves focus and emotional regulation. Howard County Recreation and Parks – as well as Columbia Association – has established programs for mindfulness (e.g., yoga, tai chi, and meditation) as well as for other forms of fitness (e.g., dance, Zumba, nature walks). CA and Recreation and Parks also offer mentorship opportunities for children/teens. However, kids and families face barriers to access these services, which often require family financial, transportation, and other logistical resources. To address these barriers, these programs could be implemented on school grounds during recess or after school to supplement school physical education classes at no cost to families. These systems (e.g., school and recreation/parks) together could provide a more protective dose of mindfulness, fitness, and social connectedness.

Another example of an existing strength is the opportunity to interact and read to pets from the Howard County Animal Control and Adoption Center. This opportunity could be brought to schools and help with not only academics, but also emotional regulation, empathy, compassion, and social connection.

And yet another example is the Howard County Public Library System, which offers an array of classes focused on art/music, outdoor activities, and mental health promotion. Like schools, our libraries are located within communities and could offer an additional hub for promoting resilience and preventing mental health illness.

In closing, we chose to call Howard County home because of its community level investment in children and families. Let us continue to live up to those core values. I urge you to invest in systemic efforts to promote resilience and prevent mental illness.

Sincerely,
Wai Chow
Resident in zip code 21046