

## Testimony

### County Council Budget Hearing

April 29, 2015

Andrea Ingram, Executive Director  
Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center, Inc.

Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center and the Community Services Partnership grant program. You are very familiar with our services and programs and we thank you for your support over many years.

In the past year, Grassroots has continued to respond to the growing needs of Howard County residents. As the Single Point of Entry for the Coordinated System of Homeless Services, our crisis counselors are responding to 60 to 100 new households each month that are homeless or imminently homeless. We attempt to help the family or individual resolve the crisis and refer eligible households to the coordinated system for more intensive intervention if no solution is found. Counselors work hard on preventing homelessness, re-housing if possible, and short-term interventions which allow for more time to seek a more permanent resolution. The most vulnerable households are prioritized for admission to our 33-bed family and women's shelter and the 18-bed men's shelter. During the winter, the Cold Weather Shelter, a successful partnership with the faith community, provided an additional 20 -25 beds each night. Again this past winter Grassroots managed the "Code Blue" Emergency Motel shelter during life-threatening weather conditions. For our crisis staff and administrative staff, this was a very labor intensive activity, but we can be proud that everyone was sheltered during this unusually cold winter.

Grassroots also operates the Day Resource Center in partnership with the faith community serving the chronically homeless population living outside along the Route One corridor in Howard County. We are excited to work with the County Department of Housing and Volunteers of America to combine the Center with a 33-bed housing project to serve this population.

Other crisis services include our hotlines, walk-in counseling, and the Mobile Crisis Team which responds with the police to psychiatric crises, intense family conflict, and traumatic death situations in Howard County. After a community evaluation of the Mobile Crisis Team it was determined that another team was needed to respond to calls in the northern district. The second team was implemented November 1. We anticipate having over 800 responses this year, compared to 542 last year.

We deeply appreciate the County's significant support of Grassroots and enormous generosity of the Howard County community. However, the overall funding picture for the coming year is very challenging, putting even more pressure on local support. As you must know, federal funding over the

past few years has been reduced, and generally less reliable. State support tends to be flat from year to year. The exception in the past year is increasing funds available for mental health services. Even private funders regularly change their priorities and limit the amounts available for non-profit agencies. The trend is clear that local jurisdictions need to take the lead in funding the human services priorities in their community.

The County Executive's budget includes funding for Grassroots of \$1.5 million for FY 16, the same amount as the current fiscal year. We are grateful that our funding will be maintained, however, we must find ways to reduce expenditures in a very tight budget, and increase other sources of funding to continue to serve at current levels. We ask that you support County Executive Kittleman's recommended funding for Grassroots and appreciate your serious consideration and support.