



**Public Hearing – Operating Budget FY 16  
Testimony form HopeWorks of Howard County**

April 29, 2015

Dear County Council Members,

As you know HopeWorks of Howard County is our county's local rape crisis and domestic violence center. We work to make our community safer for women and girls and in doing so; make our county safer for everyone. We do this through our comprehensive and customized client services as well as our public education and prevention work.

Between fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2014, we have seen the number of individual clients we serve grow from 2,536 in FY12 to 3,590 in FY14, which is a 41% increase. We have seen dramatic growth in the number of people who come to Howard County General Hospital for medical care as a result of sexual or domestic violence and receive HopeWorks advocacy services – 94 people served from April 2013 through March 2014 and 200 people served from April 2014 through March 2015. And when we finally opened our second transitional house in February, it was full within three weeks.

We work hard to continue to meet the growing demand for our services and we need the ongoing support of the Department of Citizen Services to succeed in meeting this demand. We ask that you fully support the budget for Citizen Services – particularly the Citizen Services Partnership grants program.

The Department of Citizen Services is however, much more than just a funding source for HopeWorks. They have been true partners in the effort to improve and stabilize services for some of our most vulnerable citizens. HopeWorks participation in the North Laurel Multi-Service Center, the Coordinated System of Homeless Services, the Getting Ahead program out of the Board to Promote Self-Sufficiency and the current conversation regarding a possible non-profit center are all direct results of the leadership of Lois Mikkila and the incredible staff of Citizen Services. Because of their tireless work and larger vision, our clients receive greater quality, more comprehensive and better coordinated services than ever before.

Again, we ask that you fully fund the proposed budget for the Department of Citizen Services and we also ask that you take a critical look at the recommendations regarding the future of this department. HopeWorks and those we serve do not want to see the benefits gained under the current leadership and structure be lost in transition.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer Pollitt Hill".

Jennifer Pollitt Hill, MSW  
Executive Director