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March 10, 2010

The Honorable William D. Euille and Members of City Council
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3211

Dear Mayor Euille, Vice Mayor Donley, and Members of the City Council:

I am writing to express the concerns of Alexandria's Homeless Services Coordinating Committee (HSCC) regarding the proposed housing funding cuts in the Fiscal Year 2011 budget. HSCC is a partnership between public agencies and non-profits to help address the housing and supportive services needs of those most vulnerable in our community. It is comprised of representatives from over 30 public and non-profit organizations and its mission is to ensure the planning, coordination and implementation of an effective continuum of care to eliminate homelessness in our City. Components in the continuum of care include prevention and intervention services to help persons avoid homelessness; outreach, assessment and supportive services to address the individual needs of persons who become homeless; emergency shelter and transitional housing; supportive services housing for homeless persons with special needs; and housing and services to help homeless persons make the transition to permanent housing and independent living.

The need for more affordable housing in our City is a long standing concern that has gained much attention. While the issue has been given much attention and discussion, we have been losing ground maintaining the existing stock of affordable housing instead of adding to the stock of affordable housing units. In its interim recommendations to City Council in April 2008, the Affordable Housing Initiatives Work Group stated, "The loss of affordable housing that has occurred in the last decade is a clear and present threat to the City's economic and racial/ethnic diversity."

Affordable housing, especially affordable rental housing, is rapidly disappearing in Alexandria. Between 2000 and 2008, we lost more than 10,000 nonsubsidized affordable rental housing units because of increases in rents. Over the next five years, 1,000 non-Resolution 830 publicly-assisted units face potential loss of subsidy.

The proposed cuts to housing funds in the Fiscal Year 2011 budget will only increase this "clear and present threat to the City's economic racial/ethnic diversity." The proposed \$686,849 cut in housing funds is an almost 30 percent reduction relative to Fiscal Year 2010. The largest item proposed for reduction is the \$502,060 of real estate tax dedicated for affordable housing initiatives.

We cannot appropriately move forward with the City's Housing Master Plan process and efforts to address affordable housing in Alexandria when City Council takes actions that

further reduce our current limited affordable housing situation. These proposed cuts will, for all practical purposes, stop the conversation before it begins. Therefore, we respectfully request that City Council not reduce housing funding in Fiscal Year 2011 or at least not reduce the funding as dramatically as proposed. While it is understood that the City cannot expand the number of affordable housing units, given the current economic climate, at the same time we should not reduce our existing housing stock. We need to stop the "one step forward, two steps back" process regarding affordable housing.

The HSCC thanks you for your attention to our concerns and we very much look forward to continually working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kari Galloway". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Kari Galloway
Co-Chair
Alexandria Homeless Services
Coordinating Committee

cc: James K. Hartmann, City Manager