



Public Hearing Testimony on the FY 2023 Fairfax County Budget

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots non-partisan organization that cares deeply about elections, voting, and civic involvement.

We are submitting testimony in overall support of the FY 2023 Fairfax County proposed budget with a focus on elections, competitive wage support for county employees and school staff, affordable housing, mental health services, and school health. We acknowledge and applaud the work of the board and staff who have worked to balance the need to support and expand county services, while balancing these needs with the multiple post-pandemic financial stressors on county individuals.

Elections: We strongly support the county's investment in election services and applaud the expansion of these services as a support of voting rights for all county residents as we go forward. We especially urge adequate funding to support early voting for as many of our citizens as possible. This includes multiple, early-voting satellite sites with good geographic distribution around the county. We also support increased funding for Election Office staff. We support designated funding to combat mis- and dis-information concerning election security.

Wage support for county staff and school staff has been delayed and is no longer comparable to other staff in the region. We support the increased wage support for all county staff, though we note that the proposed level is still below the calculated living wage (MIT living wage calculator.) We expect that adjustments will need to continue in the future to bring the county employees' compensation up to par.

Affordable housing is a long-term issue as prices rise. We support the county's effort to support those who are vulnerable to elevated housing costs through the emergency rental program and dedication of revenue to affordable housing efforts.

Mental health and vulnerable populations: We support the expansion of services for mental health and vulnerable populations. We specifically highlight our support for expanding services for Diversion First and for the Opioid Taskforce. We also support the funding for positions added to the Co-Responder Program, the Emergency Rental Assistance program, and the Child Protective Services Mobile Unit.

Post-Pandemic school health and public health preparedness: The reopening of schools, post pandemic, has highlighted the need for a licensed health professional on site in all school settings, and we applaud the commitment to make a school nurse available at each school. We also highlight the wisdom of increasing the commitment of resources in the county health department for preparedness in the future.

CEDAW: We would like to thank the Board for a resolution in support of CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women,) and hope that there will be funding to complete a gender equity study that evaluates the status of women in the county and furthers the CEDAW resolution passed by the board on March 8, 2022. This would provide a data-driven evaluation of resources required to ensure the removal of all county policies that discriminate against women.