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February 13, 2017

Sharon Bulova, Chair

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

12000 Government Center Parkway

Fairfax, Virginia 22035

Dear Chairman Bulova:

Your leadership has helped to make Fairfax County a place that families want to raise their children and businesses want to invest. Tomorrow, you will receive the County Executive’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2018. As you review the details, and await final state-level decisions from the General Assembly, please consider:

* There are 53,447 children in economically disadvantaged families in Fairfax County. That’s 20 percent of the children in the county. Their families are struggling to meet basic needs like food, housing, utilities, child care and transportation. Their children are more likely to face health and mental health challenges; less likely to have the opportunity to attend high quality early education; and face going without meals when not in school.
	+ Among these children, 8,518 are living in deep poverty – with families earning below 50 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Children born into deep poverty are three times more likely to be in deep poverty as adults, and experience greater toxic stress and adverse experiences than children in living in or above poverty levels.
* Fairfax County’s partnership with the state on Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) continues to strengthen early learning in the county. In addition, “VPI+” has been made possible through a federal Preschool Development Grant, though the 2017-18 school year is slated to be our final year of that opportunity. Braiding funds, accessing federal grant funds and the local choice to use Title I dollars for preschool has made a difference in Fairfax.
* There are 2,000 children on the waiting list for child care assistance in our locality alone. From FY2015 to FY2016, we’ve seen stalled participation in the state’s child care assistance program – which is intended to help low-income working families to afford child care - and a loss of 4,500 children statewide due to insufficient funds.
* Across Virginia, children’s health insurance coverage has reached historically high rates. However, in Fairfax County, there are still 7,976 children in low-income families without health insurance.

Your budget can prioritize the needs of economically disadvantaged children by investing in child care, Virginia Preschool Initiative, mental health and support services for students in high poverty schools, and housing affordability. Your leadership is also needed to ensure that children are able to maintain access to preventative health services and regular check-ups. Policy changes at the federal level to replace the Affordable Care Act or alter Medicaid or Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) could reduce the number of insured children.

As you prepare for local budget and policy choices, please prioritize and safeguard your historical, local investments and preserve your reputation as a leader for local families.

Additional details are in the enclosed fact sheet. Please contact Mary Beth Testa, Voices’ Northern Virginia Policy Consultant, at marybeth@mbstsolutions.com if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Margaret Nimmo Holland

Executive Director