



February 20, 2017

Mayor Allison Silberberg
Alexandria City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mayor Silberberg:

Your leadership has put Alexandria in the spotlight, demonstrating what is possible with collaboration, smart policies, and a focus on children and families. This week, you will receive the City Manager'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 8,752 children in economically disadvantaged families in the City of Alexandria. That's one-third of the children in the city. 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, 1,423 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.
- Alexandria's efforts with the state Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) continue to strengthen early learning in the city, with crucial partnerships between Alexandria City Public Schools and high-quality private child care centers. But an urgent need persists to serve these children and the many more who are eligible.
- Alexandria's investment in a "Scholarship for Fours" means the parents of four-year-old children in VPI can afford full-day services in child care while they go to work to support their families. This local investment is making a real-life difference for Alexandrians. Still, there are infants, toddlers, *and* preschoolers on the waiting list for child care assistance in the city. 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. Despite this, there are 1,150 children in low-income families in Alexandria 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 can 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