VOICE FAIRFAX KEY ISSUES & RATIONALE

I. ENSURE THAT THE CHILDREN OF VIRGINIA HAVE AN EQUITABLE STARTING POINT IN LIFE. Thousands of VOICE leaders have said for them this means Pre-K, access to quality after-school and summer programming, investment in the sorely neglected Gum Springs Community Center that is a vital hub, and increase in school mental health workers.

Quality After-School & Summer Programming at Gum Spring Community Center and Title One Schools. VOICE leaders have talked to over 2,000 principals, educators, parents and students throughout Fairfax and one thing they all agree on is the need for quality after-school & summer programming, especially at Title I schools and in badly neglected communities like Gum Springs.

Pre-K. Ensure that 4-year-olds from low-income families have access to PreK. Over the past 5 years, Fairfax County has left $13 million from the state on the table, funds that could have been put toward the creation of 862 needed preschool slots for 4-year-olds from low-income households. In order to access these state VPI preschool monies, Virginia requires that the County must also put in its own money. A realistic estimate after looking at other similar regions would be around $6 million a year in funds from the County. We know that we have been able find the money for the things that are important to us. VOICE is looking to the next Chair to do everything in his/her power to ensure that our children have an equitable starting point in life-- this means taking state dollars that are available, finding the matching monies needed and making it a #1 priority to find spaces to expand the classrooms.

II. KEEP FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES TOGETHER. A) Invest in affordable housing. B) Fully fund the positions needed to ensure that Fairfax residents, who are being threatened with deportation, have access to a lawyer.

Enable the 1,000+ families living in Rt. 1 mobile homes to remain intact. The families who live in mobile home parks along Route 1 are part of our VOICE family. We stand together. Each of these 1,000+ families invested in a piece of the American Dream by buying a home, a mobile home. These homes are almost impossible to move and the families will lose their investment if the land is sold from underneath them.

In order for Fairfax County to meet its own stated affordable housing goals of 15,000 new units of affordable housing, it must increase NEW dollars to at least $100 million a year. VOICE applauds the County’s proposal to increase new funds to $28 million in 2020 for affordable housing. This is a critical start. VOICE proposes that Fairfax raise its affordable housing fund to $60M over the next 4 years, and then over the next 10 years it must double that to $120M, both to ensure that communities that have lived here for decades can continue to afford to remain AND to allow for anticipated population growth. VOICE calls on the next Chair to make sure the County’s affordable housing plan includes in its blueprint real investment in the County’s historic African American communities, mobile home parks, and housing near Metro and bus hubs. According to the County’s recent report on affordable housing, its own goal is to build 15,000 new units to address housing needs. If the County were to actualize its affordable housing goal of 15,000 units this would require over $100M a year for the next 12 years. VOICE
calls on the next Chair to lead us towards that needed minimum goal. **Moreover, the 15,000 unit goal does not account for loss of units or anticipated population growth.** Each year a portion of the current 9,500 units of market-rate affordable housing—more than half of which is located in the Rt1/Lee area—disappears due to redevelopment. In addition, many people’s incomes cannot keep up with the increases in rents. Population pressure will only make this harder: according to George Mason University, over the next 15 years the County is expected to grow by 60,000 new residents and around 20,000 of them will need affordable housing. For comparison, in this domain of governance Montgomery County has allocated $64M and the District of Columbia has allocated $130M for affordable housing. Fairfax is way behind. **The other critical ingredient for affordable housing is land.** VOICE looks to the next Chair to join VOICE, our DMV sister affiliates and political leaders in ensuring that 30% of all housing built on WMATA/Metro-owned land is affordable. In addition, that the County requires 100% affordable housing on County land with a floor of 30%.

Immigrant residents in Fairfax who have access to legal representation are TEN times more likely to not be separated from their families. VOICE is outraged by the injustice of separating immigrant families and the effect this has on all immigrant children. The County has an opportunity to help prevent these terrible separations by making sure Fairfax immigrant residents have access to legal representation. To do this, it needs to **grow the current defense fund from $200,000 to the needed $875,000 per year.**

VOICE thanks the Board of Supervisors for creating a pilot legal defense fund of $200,000 for residents being threatened with deportation. The need is significantly larger than that amount can accommodate: Currently, there are 12,000 people facing deportation in VA, and many of them live in Fairfax. According to the Migration Policy Institute, **there are roughly 74,000 US citizen children, including 10,200 DACA recipients, in Virginia living with at least 1 undocumented parent.** There are also 23,500 persons from El Salvador and Honduras in VA with now-threatened Temporary Protective (TPS) status. In Virginia, TPS residents produce **$1.3 billion** in economic activity annually and DACA recipients contribute over **$10M** in taxes each year. The economic contribution these people make, the local taxes they contribute to, and the well-being of their children all stand to gain if Fairfax County can lead like neighboring jurisdictions of Washington DC and Montgomery County in providing families with legal representation. VOICE knows that **family separations are an indelible stain on US history, starting with the violence of slavery** and continuing to the present day with an unjust criminal justice system that targets and incarcerates black and brown people disproportionately. Fair representation is one way the County can make the system more just.

**III. ENSURE THAT THOSE THAT HAVE SERVED TIME ARE NOT PUNISHED FOR THE REST OF TIME.** Instead be smart and make sure Returning Citizens can get jobs to support themselves and be engaged fully in daily life.