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**FISCAL YEAR 2010 PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET**

**APRIL 27, 2009**

**TESTIMONY**

Submitted By

Harry Schwarz

Treasurer

Good evening, Madam Chair and Members of the County Council

My name is Harry Schwarz and I am Treasurer for the Association of Community Services (ACS). On behalf of over 130 providers and community advocates represented by ACS, who serve more than 100,000 Howard County residents annually, I am presenting testimony in support of the County Executive's FY 2010 Operating Budget especially in the area of human services for our community.

As the nation and the world struggle with the economic recession, we, in Howard County, are not immune. According to the recently released report, "Measuring Material Hardship of Howard County Maryland Households," commissioned by ACS from the Policy Analysis Center, in the last year, there has been:

- A 20% increase in the number of people receiving food stamps;
- A 17% increase in the number of people receiving temporary cash assistance;
- A 66% increase in the number of people receiving eviction prevention assistance;
- A 55% increase in the funding (+\$572, 719) for home energy assistance;
- A 27% increase in the number of evictions through September 2008;
- 1,206 unserved individuals for Housing Choice Vouchers;
- 5,116 unserved individuals for public housing; and
- One out of every eight children in Howard County Public Schools receives Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs).
- Unemployment in Howard County has risen from an average of 3.1% for 2008 to 4.9% (42% increase) in 2009.

Clearly, the need for human services is growing in Howard County and many of the providers have not recovered from the drastic State budget cuts made seven years ago. We are extremely grateful that under the current County administration, human services continue as a priority as evidenced in the FY 2010 budget.

Specifically, we are pleased to support the following:

1. Funding for the Mental Health Authority to continue Mobile Crisis Team services seven days per week from 12 noon – 11:00 p.m.
2. The Community Service Partnerships, including a \$40,000 Emergency Assistance Supplement to support critical human services provided by non – profit partners.
3. Continuance of Sunday hours at all branches of the Howard County Library.

It is regrettable that cuts are coming in the Health Department with a loss of three positions and the Sheriff's office with a loss of four positions and the alternative sentencing program. We hope these programs will be priorities on the list of services to be restored.

It is crucial for County Government to continue to strengthen its investment in the human services infrastructure so that all residents of Howard County may have a quality of life that reflects the resources of the one of the richest counties in one of the richest states in the country.

We look forward to working with you to keep Howard County truly the best place to live for all our residents.

Thank you for this opportunity to support the FY 2010 Howard County Budget.

Respectfully,

Harry Schwarz

Treasurer

MD Dept of Labor, Licensing and Regulation; Retrieved April 23, 2009 from <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/lmi/laus/howard.shtml>