

**Proposed:** November 9, 2009  
**Adopted:** November 9, 2009



## RESOLUTION

**DATE:** November 9, 2009

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Community Outreach & Public Advocacy Committee  
Kristina Messner, Chair

**RESOLVE TO:** TO APPROVE 2010 LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT AGENDA

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### **SUMMARY**

Approval of this Resolution by the Trustees will authorize the Community Outreach & Public Advocacy Committee to work with elected officials, community organizations, and others to educate and advocate on behalf of Hopkins House in support of the specified public policy issues.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

To authorize the Community Outreach & Public Advocacy Committee to present to the public and elected officials the position of the Hopkins House Trustees and their rationale on the attached matters of public policy during the 2010 calendar year.

### **PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS**

I recommend approval of this Resolution.

### **DISCUSSION**

Continuing into 2010, we are grappling with an economic downturn that has adversely affected the lives of so many Americans—particularly the families that we serve. Federal, state and local governments are dealing with rapidly declining revenues and increased demand for ever-costly services. Uncertainties in the Nation's financial outlook threaten the safety net that protects our most vulnerable populations. Declining revenues will continue to require difficult decisions by elected officials in order to bridge the shortfall in government funding in coming years.

While the bleak economic outlook challenges government's capacity, it remains the responsibility of government to help those, particularly children and their families, who are unable to fully meet their basic needs. We believe these basic needs include safe, accessible,

quality child care. Economic self-sufficiency depends on employment. For parents, employment depends on child care.

The Hopkins House Trustees have long recognized that investments in critical human services programs can and do save public funds by minimizing the need for more costly services later in life. Yet as revenues fall, populations continue to grow, adults continue to age, and for some, the economic downturn causes need where there was none before. The current state and local budget revenue downturns do not mitigate the demand for essential human services, they only exacerbate it.

*The Hopkins House Trustees are committed to working collaboratively with public officials, community groups, faith-based institutions, and others in identifying and developing priorities to help meet the health and human services needs of children, youth, and their families, particularly those at-risk. While budget reductions may be unavoidable, the Trustees seek ways to ensure that those cuts are the least short-sighted possible.*

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## **LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES**

*Hopkins House will take the lead advocating on these public policy priorities.*

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### **1. ADDRESS THE DELAY IN PAYMENT FROM FAIRFAX COUNTY**

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Payments from Fairfax County have routinely been delayed based upon their existing payment system that requires invoices to be 30 days old prior to payment. This puts preschool centers at a considerable budget disadvantage as invoices are not sent out until services have been provided to the children we serve.

Fairfax recognized the cash-flow challenges this creates and addressed it for in-home childcare providers by allowing payment after an invoice is only 2 weeks old. That system should be applied to childcare centers like it is to in-home childcare providers.

*The Hopkins House Trustees request that Fairfax County adjust its payment practices for childcare centers to reflect those of in-home childcare providers.*

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### **2. STREAMLINE COORDINATION OF YOUTH PROGRAMS, INCLUDING EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS, IN THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA**

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We are fortunate in the City of Alexandria to have a City government that devotes a significant amount of its resources to the betterment of youth. This sustained, long-term commitment has won the City numerous accolades and recognition, but more importantly, has resulted in improvement in the achievement of our youth.

As the economic downturn forces policymakers to pay greater attention to every resource expended by government, the coordination, focus and administration of these services to youth has drawn significant attention.

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In the City of Alexandria there are a myriad of government agencies, non-profits and public/private partnerships invested in programs that serve youth in the City, including early childhood policy and funding. The government agencies include, but are not limited to the Department of Human Services, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities, Community Services Board, Court Service Unit, Office on Women, Alexandria City Public Schools, and many others. For each of these agencies, there are corresponding (in some cases a few) policymaking boards and commissions.

Within the non-profit arena, there are numerous organizations and coalitions that receive public resources to assess and serve youth.

This myriad of entities and groups not only consumes a considerable amount of human and financial resources in the City, but sometimes creates conflicts around policy. We believe the children and families of the City could be better served by a single, comprehensive framework that includes participation of all invested partners, provides for greater accountability for the results of investments, and focuses our very limited resources on those most critical needs.

*The Hopkins House Trustees encourages efforts to streamline the coordination of youth programs in the City, including early childhood programs in the City of Alexandria.*

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**3. MAINTAIN THE REGULAR CLEARING OF THE WAITING LIST FOR CHILD CARE SUBSIDIES IN THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA AND ENCOURAGE THE SAME IN FAIRFAX COUNTY**

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In last year's budget cycle, the City of Alexandria cleared its more than 300 children on their waiting list for childcare fee subsidies. First and foremost, the City should be commended on doing so. Unless funding continues to be identified and allocated to keep this waiting list clear, these children, mostly from low-income families, will be unable to access the childcare services they need to prepare for success in kindergarten.

Fairfax County has over 2000 children on their waiting list in 2009. Recognizing that Fairfax is a much larger jurisdiction from Alexandria, it still bears emphasizing that Fairfax can do better.

*The Hopkins House Trustees encourages the City Council to allocate sufficient funding to ensure that there is no Childcare Fee Subsidy waiting list in the City of Alexandria and encourage Fairfax County to work to lower the numbers of children on their own waiting list. Furthermore, we encourage policymakers in both jurisdictions to plan financial contingencies for increased demand of these services in the upcoming budget year.*

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**4. ENCOURAGE ALEXANDRIA AND FAIRFAX COUNTY TO DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE PLAN TO ADDRESS THE PROGRAMS FUNDED BY THE STIMULUS PACKAGE ONCE THAT MONEY RUNS OUT.**

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Funding obtained from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 from the federal government has been essential in sustaining certain programs that were in danger of significant cuts. That funding is not recurring in nature. The programs supported by that funding, however,

are integral to fulfilling the basic needs of Alexandria and Fairfax County. As a result, a sustainability plan for those funds is essential to maintain these basic needs.

*The Hopkins House Trustees support the creation of a sustainability plan when stimulus money is no longer available.*

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## **LEGISLATIVE ITEMS TO SUPPORT**

*Hopkins house will support the legislative advocacy activities of others who take the lead on these public policy priorities.*

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### **1. MAINTAIN STATE AND LOCAL FUNDS FOR CHILD CARE SERVICES FOR LOW-INCOME WORKING FAMILIES**

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During periods of economic downturn, a secure source of State and local dollars is needed in the Commonwealth to defray the cost of child care for economically disadvantaged families not participating in TANF/VIEW, known as “Fee System Child Care.” State and local investments in helping families move off of welfare and into long-term economic stability are undermined when Fee System child care is not adequately funded by the State and local governments.

Research indicates that the employment and economic independence of parents is jeopardized when affordable child care is outside their reach. Parents may be forced into unemployment in order to care for their children; forced to begin or return to welfare programs; or forced to place their children in unregulated and potentially unsafe child care settings, or worse yet, leave them to care for one another alone.

Without subsidies to meet market prices, low-income working families may not access the quality child care and early childhood education that helps young children arrive at kindergarten prepared and ready to learn. Child care assistance is essential for continued economic growth. It also contributes to low unemployment, preserves state and local investments in welfare to work programs, and provides excellent opportunities for a true partnership between localities and community-based organizations.

*The Hopkins House Trustees support efforts to maintain, or limit any decrease in, state and local government funding for Fee System Child Care.*

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### **2. MAINTAIN CHILD CARE PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENT RATES**

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Additional funding seems to always be needed to increase the payment rates for subsidized child care services (maximum reimbursable rates). However, in these difficult economic times it is essential that we recognize that increases in reimbursement rates are unlikely and therefore, we should concentrate our focus on ensuring that the rates do not decrease.

Federal policy requires that states establish payment rates for subsidized child care services that ensure eligible children equal access to comparable child care services. Although Virginia conducts a market survey every two years, as required by federal policy, the rates are not updated

regularly to reflect the current market. Virginia has not increased its school age child care rates since 2001; or its infant, toddler and preschool child care rates since 2004.

When payment rates do not reflect the true market cost for child care, low income families often have to pay higher fees than they can afford for child care services. When this happens, the value of wages earned shrinks, preventing families' advancement to true self-sufficiency. In addition, providers may choose not to serve low income families, thereby limiting families' child care options.

It remains important to note, however, that if payment rates are not increased on a regular two year cycle, the rate increases become cumulative. Then, when the payment rates are changed, the subsequent increase in the required local match becomes unrealistic for localities to absorb.

*The Hopkins House Trustees support efforts to maintain State funding for the payment rates for subsidized child care.*

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### **3. MAINTAIN FUNDING FOR PRE-K**

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The 2008 General Assembly increased funding for Pre-K education, and the state-recognized cost per pupil was raised from \$5,700 to \$6,000 annually.

More importantly, the General Assembly capped the maximum match that must be paid by participating localities at .50 (or 1 dollar for every dollar the State provides). This match rate became effective July 1, 2009.

There will be few, if any, new funding proposals for Pre-K education in the 2010 General Assembly Session and, in view of the State's budget crisis there may be efforts to reduce funding or to reduce the match.

*The Hopkins House Trustees support efforts to resist legislative efforts to reduce funding and to support efforts to maintain funding for Pre-K.*

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### **4. MAINTAIN MEDICAID SERVICES TO PROVIDE HEALTH CARE TO VIRGINIA'S CHILDREN**

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Children and parents/caretakers of children comprise about 70% of Medicaid beneficiaries in Virginia. With the economic crisis and the highest unemployment rate in Virginia since 1996, more children and families need Medicaid services. At a time when the Commonwealth must find ways to cut the budget, there may be efforts to cut this critical program.

As Governor Kaine has said, "Virginia's Medicaid program is very lean." Children and families in Virginia cannot afford any additional cuts to services that keep our children healthy.

*The Hopkins House Trustees support maintaining current funding for Medicaid, and if possible increased funding to cover the additional people needing health coverage during this time.*

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The Committee voted unanimously on October 1, 2009 to recommend approval of this Resolution by the Trustees.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Under this Resolution, authority is granted to the Committee to utilize available funds allocated to the Office of the President for Travel in order to attend meetings with elected officials and groups in Fairfax County, City of Alexandria, and Richmond. Therefore, the financial impact of approval of this Resolution will, at most, be incremental to the currently authorized Organization budget.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

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