

FY 2025 Budget Comments Received



New comments on top.

Date Received	Comment
Thursday, March 21, 2024	<p>Staff should reconsider, and Council should reject, the proposal to reduce service on the DASH 104 line. This is a critical commuter bus that helps residents reach the Pentagon and Metro to downtown DC. The existing 30-minute headways already pose problems for those who must connect from bus to Metro and vice versa, as a missed connection can mean a lengthy wait for the next bus. Cutting frequency down to once an hour will make the 104 nearly unusable as a commuter bus and will force many residents to drive instead, creating additional traffic during hours when others are already driving to work, school, and child care.</p> <p>I cannot believe that there is a lack of ridership warranting the proposed change. I commute on the 104 and it is always full, even on Fridays. If cost is the issue, the answer is not to cut service but to reinstate a fare for the bus. Commuters (and employers who subsidize transit costs) would rather pay a fare for a bus with adequate service levels than have a fare-free bus that doesn't come often enough to be reliable. It should be possible for the city to keep other DASH lines fare-free but charge for the 104 if necessary.</p> <p>Please reconsider the proposal to gut the critical 104 DASH line. The City should be encouraging more residents to use public transit options, not taking such options away.</p>
Wednesday, March 20, 2024	<p>I am writing to express my disappointment with the plan to potentially cut service on the DASH 104 line. While ridership dropped off significantly during COVID, it has been returning, albeit slowly. I ride the 104 every day, and several days a week it is almost full on my morning and afternoon commute. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday typically has the most people. If service is cut to once an hour, how many full buses will we have to wait for before we can catch one? Yes, there are other bus options, but they involve walking long distances and are not remotely convenient, and would result in adding at least 45 minutes to my commute (each way). In addition, many of us are unable to walk that kind of distance, as the Northridge area has a lot of hills. This is the kind of thing that will push many of us, myself likely included, to start driving to work again.</p> <p>For a city that thinks of itself as "eco-friendly," this move appears to actually be a step backwards.</p> <p>If this cut is because of budget issues, perhaps you should consider charging passengers for riding the bus. Free rides were nice, but not at the expense of service.</p> <p>The fact that this was not publicized in advance AT ALL leads me to the logical conclusion that the City Council/DASH does not respect the citizens of Alexandria. Or at least not the citizens of the Northridge area. Badly done.</p>
Tuesday, March 19, 2024	<p>I use dashbus 104 to commute to and from work every weekday. Reducing service to only every 60 minutes would drastically impact my ability to use public transit to commute. I would rather pay for service than service be diminished to this capacity.</p>
Monday, March 18, 2024	<p>As a member of the Board, I urge you to add back the requested funding to the City's allocation for ALIVE! This will allow us to implement the improvements outlined in the recent Food Insecurity report. As a long-term City resident and a long-term employee of the City's Dept of Community and Human Services, and now a volunteer for ALIVE! food programs, I am impressed by ALIVE!'s ability to respond to community needs, efficiently establish partnerships and leverage a little to make a huge difference.</p> <p>Thanks to all of you!</p>
Monday, March 18, 2024	<p>Please fully fund our schools. We need to be able to pay our teachers competitively so they will stay with ACPS!</p>
Saturday, March 16, 2024	<p>Hi! I'm a newer resident of Alexandria (since 2022) and appreciate the opportunity to provide input into the budget process. Since moving here, I have come to appreciate all that Alexandria has to offer. As a newer resident, I am also very aware of how expensive it has become to own a home (or even rent) here. I was very happy to see the Zoning for Housing changes adopted as an important first step to addressing the very real affordability issues that the city is facing.</p> <p>I understand that there are many priorities competing for a place in the 2025 budget and I want to encourage you to continue the progress you have made by providing \$10 million to address the backlog of affordable housing projects that have already been approved but have not been able to move forward due to lack of funding.</p> <p>Affordable housing projects naturally take time to develop and the sooner they are started, the sooner residents who are being priced out can find their place in our city. Economic diversity of its residents is what has helped Alexandria become the rich vibrant community it is today and that is something that we shouldn't want to lose.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Saturday, March 16, 2024	<p>As chairperson of the Alive Family Assistance Program, I would like to request additional funding to support the two Food Hubs currently located in the City. Thank you for including \$300,000 in the budget. However, there is an urgent need for an additional \$200,000 to maintain current staffing levels, increase purchasing of health food, and expand operating hours to ensure our clients have convenient access to the Hubs. The Food Hubs provides invaluable services to the community. In addition to food, the Hubs provide links to other organizations to assist with housing, jobs, day care, medical needs and much more. Food insecurity remains an important issue in Alexandria. Daily the Alive staff and volunteers work extremely hard to get food to Alexandria residents who need it most through our month end and biweekly distributions; daily deliveries to clients who are disabled, senior citizens, single parents, or veterans; and deliveries to the many food pantries located city-wide. All of these services are in addition to the Food Hubs. Alexandria is a wonderful community that has the resources to assist those in need. Please consider additional funding to the Alive Food Hubs to ensure all residents have access to healthy food. Thanks!</p>

Date Received	Comment
Friday, March 15, 2024	<p>I request that you support our schools by funding the full operating budget put forth by the ACPS School Board. As you are aware, the gap between the proposals of the Superintendent and the School Board is focused on adequate compensation for our teachers. This compensation is critical to attracting and retaining the best teachers for our community.</p> <p>I have been an active supporter of our community for many years, including through roles leading multiple school and city PTAs and school redistricting and capital projects, and I am currently Vice Chair of the ACPS School Board's Budget Advisory Committee (BAC). While these roles have informed my viewpoints on many aspects, the comments I make here are my own.</p> <p>I have children at both George Washington Middle School and Douglas MacArthur Elementary School, although I still would be making this same request even if my children were not in ACPS. High quality schools are the cornerstone of strong communities and teachers are the foundation of any school system, so it is essential that we have the best teachers. While it is somewhat inherent that teachers don't choose their profession based on the salary potential, it is necessary that we provide compensation that makes teachers feel valued. That compensation is even more crucial in our highly competitive region.</p> <p>Looking back through my documents, I am reminded of several occasions during the last decade where I, along with other community members, have asked for City Council's support with ACPS' needs. I am very thankful that in recent years there have been fewer occasions where the community has had to strongly advocate to bridge gaps, largely because School Board and City Council (and both staffs) have made significant progress, working together on a shared vision for our city and schools. However, this current situation highlights there are still opportunities to improve this collaboration so that the Superintendent, School Board, City Council, and staffs are better aligned, so I also respectfully request that everyone try to avoid the politics and continue working on being better together.</p> <p>I appreciate that the City of Alexandria has finite funding, and it is a complex process of matching community desires with available resources. While I generally don't like more taxes, I would support an increase in residential property taxes if it were necessary to fully fund the School Board's recommended budget that includes both a market rate adjustment (MRA) and reconciles the deferred historical step increases. However, I also want to be considerate of other concerns throughout our community and urge you to consider funding at least one of either the MRA or step increase if you feel that both would be too significant.</p> <p>In closing, I reiterate my request that you support our schools by funding the full operating budget put forth by the ACPS School Board.</p> <p>Thank you, Bill</p>
Friday, March 15, 2024	<p>السادة أعضاء مجلس المدينة، أنا هنا للتعبير عن دعمي القوي لتمويل مدارسنا العامة بالكامل والموافقة على الميزانية المقترحة من المشرف. كطالب في مدرسة مدينة الإسكندرية الثانوية وهذا المجتمع، أعتقد أن الاستثمار في التعليم ضروري لرفاهية أطفالنا ونجاحهم المستقبلي ولمدىتنا ككل. ومن المهم أيضاً الاستثمار في المعلمين لأنهم مضياح المدرسة. اسمي هاجر أبوجينية. أنا طالب في مدرسة مدينة الإسكندرية الثانوية. منذ يومي الأول، رأيت الدعم من أساتذتي. لقد عملوا بجد لمساعدتي في تحقيق أهدافي المقترحة، يمكننا ضمان حصول أطفالنا على التعليم الذي يستحقونه وأن مجتمعنا يستمر ACPS ومن الأهمية بمكان أن تتمتع مدارسنا بالموارد التي تحتاجها لتوفير تعليم جيد، ودعم معلمينا، وتلبية الاحتياجات المتنوعة لطلابنا. من خلال التمويل الكامل لميزانية مدارس في الأزدهار.</p>
Friday, March 15, 2024	<p>Alexandria should reduce funding for the Alexandria Police Department, specifically the programs listed below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community Relations Division - Youth Outreach Program - Crime Prevention Unit - School Resource Unit - Community Police Academy <p>The purpose of the Police Department is to solve crimes committed within the city of Alexandria. The functions listed above are superfluous to that purpose. Resources intended to prevent crime are better allocated to other departments, namely those below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Housing - Community and Human Services - ACPS - Recreational and Cultural Services - Library <p>Thanks.</p>
Friday, March 15, 2024	<p>Dear Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Jackson and Members of City Council,</p> <p>I am writing in support of fully funding the Alexandria City Public School's FY 2025 Approved Combined Funds Budget, this includes all the additions from our current School Board members. I think they listened to their constituents and recognize the school system needs more than the superintendent's proposal.</p> <p>I would like to see Council creatively thinking of ways to increase revenue along with a residential tax rate increase. I hope the Council can more aggressively work with our Virginia state legislators to best support our schools. Our schools' public-private partnerships are not making up for this funding gap no matter how hard we wish they would. In the last four years, we have seen more than ever the need to get back to basics such as with housing, food, health, infrastructure, and of course education, to name a few. I believe a tax rate increase of at least 4% is necessary. Likely Alexandria will need to surpass this rate in coming years but our citizens need our assistance. Also, please note that I am not ignorant to the burden that other cuts may need to be made by Alexandria City and this is no easy task.</p> <p>I believe Alexandria can be on the forefront of making changes in our education system. An example of Alexandria trying to be a leader for new ideas, is the Alexandria Recurring Income for Success and Equity program affecting 170 participants. The idea of universal pre-k comes up over and over yet so much more needs to be done. We see this same delay in teacher pay and support. It is admirable to talk about these items but to do nothing about it leaves us no better than those that came before us.</p> <p>According to Census.gov, March 12, 2024, was Equal Pay Day, the date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year. Despite women holding the majority of positions in education, wage gap still exists in educational careers. Could this be why we continue to keep teacher wages down? Giving all our teachers a pay raise may not fix this issue but it notes that Alexandria recognizes the history of women being undervalued with a reflection of that in their wages. There is an underlying reason why teacher salaries have not increased at the rate of other careers. Our schools' public-private partnerships are not making up for this gap no matter how hard we wish that they would.</p> <p>Thank you for reading my comments, Amanda Ruff</p>

Date Received	Comment
Friday, March 15, 2024	<p>I wanted to write in about the addition of a "Clean Team Pilot Program" to the budget. I'm excited to see the city start to look for proactive ways to tackle litter and to see the plastic bag fee be utilized to do it.</p> <p>Litter is a persistent problem, especially in our most walkable and bikeable areas. It's an issue that I've raised with residents and the city for the last few years. I've managed to get more public garbage cans installed in places that need them and I clean up litter when I walk my dog. However, we need the city to take the lead and be more proactive in preventing litter in the first place.</p> <p>I hope to see this addition stay in the final budget so that we can finally start being proactive on litter in our city and I hope that these departments will take innovative approaches to tackling the issue.</p>
Friday, March 15, 2024	Hi, It is very important the ACPS be fully funded.
Thursday, March 14, 2024	<p>As a public school parent, and a resident of the city of Alexandria I urge you to fully fund our schools. We all recognize the unique needs our citizens have. These will be best supported by passing a budget that fully funds the school board's request.</p> <p>In particular, the following:</p> <p>We're asking for support urging the city manager and city council to include these school-board approved additions to the ACPS budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2% MRA for our teachers and staff to help match what neighboring jurisdictions are proposing 1.0 FTE Schol Psychologist at ACHS 0.6 FTE Dari/Pashto Interpreter 2.0 FTE Elementary AAS Teachers 2.0 FTE Middle School Deans (one at Hammond and one at GW) 1.0 FTE College and Career Center Position at ACHS 1.0 FTE Athletic Trainer at ACHS <p>Return of the lost 2021 step increase for eligible staff to help retain our more experienced teachers</p> <p>Thank you for considering this request - Lindsay</p>
Thursday, March 14, 2024	What is the urban forestry section and natural resources section budget? I'm having trouble finding those specific numbers. Also, with the urban forestry budget, how much will be spent on planting, proactive maintenance and reactive maintenance?
Wednesday, March 13, 2024	<p>I am writing regarding Alexandria Schools. I am both a teacher as well as a homeowner in the city of Alexandria. I have taught in ACPS for 20 years. I obtained 2 masters degrees as well as National Board certification during my time here. This is the first year that my salary is above \$100,000. With the high cost of living in this area, this is simply unacceptable. I am currently on step 15, when I should be on step 20. The difference between these two steps is around \$13,000. This is not just a one time \$13,000 penalty. Instead this is a penalty I receive year after year while colleagues who are new to ACPS with experience in other districts are not 5 steps behind like I am. It is unfair and we have given the ACPS school board many chances to make this right. They have not, and now we believe City Council is our only chance to help us with this.</p> <p>Throughout my years at Polk Elementary, where I have dedicated the last 20 years to teaching, I have seen many changes. When I started as a new college graduate I had 16 students in my first grade class. Polk had around 450 students during the 2004-2005 school year. It was an amazing place to be! I had students from 10 different countries represented in my class that year. When I reflect on that time I always say my students taught me as much as I taught them that year. Throughout the years Polk has grown and we are currently at over 850 students. Despite the number of students almost doubling in the last 20 years, the amount of staff to support these students has no where near doubled. As professionals, we make do with fewer resources day after day but it definitely takes a toll on us. During the last few years I have seen many amazing teachers leave ACPS because the needs of the students are too great and the support we receive from central office (the lack of appropriate curriculum, inappropriate special education placements, loyalty penalty, etc) is lacking. Our students are coming in with extreme needs- whether social/emotional, behavioral, or academic, teachers are facing insurmountable odds with less parent support than ever. As a title 1 school, we should have the most resources available to us and more staff than non title schools. Instead, we are over capacity in almost every single classroom. One of the first grade classrooms here has 26 students. 17 of those students are English language learners and 6 of them have IEPs. We also have three city wide autism classes here and each classroom has 6-7 students. That is around 20 students with high needs. Our administrators and school support team spend a lot of their day assisting with these students, leaving the other 830+ students with less support. We have been patiently waiting for central office and the school board to figure out solutions to these issues and make our schools more equitable, but the more time that passes the less faith we have in that happening.</p> <p>You may be wondering what I expect from you all. While I know there is only so much control you have over the school board, our city schools are a reflection on all of us. We have to begin to demand better for the children in this city. With all the money and resources the city of Alexandria has, we should be a top tier school division and the fact that we are barely getting by is a disgrace. One immediate solution that city council can help with is to stop building housing. We are over capacity in many schools, and almost all west end schools are bursting at the seams. With no plan to build new schools, it seems counter productive to build more apartments and town houses. Where will these children go to school? How many more students can we expect the current schools to take in? What new infrastructure is coming to the area to ease traffic as we continue to build all over the city? When do we anticipate Van Dorn Street and Duke Street will get additional lanes to accommodate the increase in population? Thank you for your time and looking forward to discussions</p>
Wednesday, March 13, 2024	Please budget generously at 4500,000 for ALIVE! This is a group that provides so many services to those in Alexandria who are struggling. Without it, our community would be at a great lose. It is the humanitarian cost of being in a caring city, and it's very important! Thank you!
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	<p>I am commenting on behalf of the ACPS School Board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).</p> <p>The role of SEAC, which is a body mandated by the State of Virginia, is to focus on the unmet needs of students with disabilities in the school district.</p> <p>The current biggest need is staff.</p> <p>The hiring and retention of Special Education staff is a topic discussed at every meeting of the SEAC because of the current special educator vacancies in ACPS and because of our concerns about losing more special education staff. We must be competitive with neighboring districts to succeed in hiring and retaining special educators.</p> <p>Here are some important and concerning facts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher hiring and retention of Special Education teachers is even more challenging than for general education teachers, due to a nationwide shortage of special education teachers. •According to the ACPS Human Resources Department, ACPS currently has 12 special education teacher vacancies and anticipates an additional 10-12 positions to open for the upcoming school year. This can lead to situations like I experienced last year: My child with significant disabilities had 5 different lead teachers in his special education classroom over the course of the year, even though he--like all students with disabilities-- thrives on consistency and routine. Would you consider it acceptable if your child's class had 5 different teachers in a single school year? •According to the ACPS Human Resources Department, ACPS has approximately 20 Instructional Assistant vacancies and expects to carry a similar number of vacancies into the upcoming hiring season. Special education teachers cannot do their jobs without Instructional Assistants. (According to HR, many of these roles are currently filled through staffing agencies. I don't know the cost of this, but surely it is not insignificant.) •According to the ACPS Human Resources Department, ACPS has approximately 5 vacancies in Central Office programmatic roles. In fact, the top two roles in the Office of Specialized Instruction are currently filled by one person. <p>According to our Acting Executive Director of Specialized Instruction, the salary increases in the Superintendent's budget are very necessary for us to be competitive in hiring and retaining special education staff. Even with these increases, hiring and retention will remain a challenge.</p> <p>Thank you for a chance to share this information. Cindy Hart SEAC Chair</p>

Date Received	Comment
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	<p>Please restore a step for all teachers that froze a step in '21 and a 2% market rate adjustment.</p> <p>I am a teacher at Naomi L. Brooks and see the need for educators to receive a financial increase.</p> <p>Thank you!</p>
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	Fully fund the ACPS Budget
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	<p>Alexandria City Council City Hall Alexandria, VA</p> <p>Dear Members of the Alexandria City Council,</p> <p>I am writing to express my strong support for increasing funding for Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). As a concerned resident and advocate for quality education, I believe that investing in our teachers is crucial to the success of our students and the future of our community.</p> <p>Currently, the experienced teachers in our school system are not receiving the compensation they deserve compared to their counterparts in other districts. This disparity in pay not only affects the morale and well-being of our educators but also has a direct impact on the quality of education our children receive.</p> <p>In recent years, we have seen troubling trends such as an uptick in drug use, high dropout rates, chronic absenteeism, and incidents of fights and crime in our schools. These issues highlight the urgent need to support our teachers who are on the front lines of addressing these challenges and shaping the minds of our young people.</p> <p>Underpaid staff members in any profession are more likely to underperform as they are burdened with financial worries and stress. By investing in our teachers, we can ensure that they are able to focus on providing the best possible education for our students without the distraction of financial insecurity.</p> <p>Moreover, it is essential that the funding allocated to ACPS is directed towards programs that provide real opportunities for our children after they graduate. We must ensure that our students are well-prepared for the future and have access to resources and support that will help them succeed in their academic and professional endeavors.</p> <p>I am also concerned about the potential consequences of underfunding our schools, which could lead to further disparities in education and the creation of a modern-day segregated system where only those who can afford private education have access to quality schooling.</p> <p>Therefore, I urge the Alexandria City Council to prioritize funding for ACPS and to invest in our teachers who play a vital role in shaping the future of our community. Please demonstrate your commitment to our children and our schools by ensuring that our educators have the support and resources they need to provide a high-quality education for all students.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my views on this important matter. I look forward to seeing the positive impact that increased funding for ACPS can have on our schools and our community.</p> <p>Sincerely, Roberto Gomez</p>
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	Please consider restoring a step for all teachers that froze a step in '21 and a 2% market rate adjustment.
Tuesday, March 12, 2024	I believe ACPS staff should have an additional step increase to make up for the frozen step in 2021/22 as well as a 2% rate adjustment. The staff works very hard to perform a critical job and it is well deserved.

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Tuesday, March 12, 2024	<p>Dear Members of the City Council,</p> <p>I'm a concerned parent who is writing to advocate for the critical need to fully fund our public schools.</p> <p>I have witnessed firsthand the invaluable impact that dedicated teachers have on the lives of our children. However, it is becoming increasingly challenging to attract and retain qualified educators, who all require degrees to teach - with some talented teachers choosing to leave for opportunities in other cities.</p> <p>My child is in the Dual Language program at John Adams and began the year without both her English speaking teacher and Spanish speaking teacher. It was a difficult start to the year, and she felt demoralized. She didn't like having many substitutes and felt as though she and her classmates were forgotten. It was difficult for the school to fill the positions and my child isn't as close to her teachers as she has been in the past given their late starts.</p> <p>It is crucial that we prioritize investment in education to provide our schools with the resources necessary to support and retain high-quality educators. By fully funding the proposed budget for our school district, we can demonstrate our commitment to valuing and supporting our teachers, thereby fostering a stable and thriving educational environment for our students.</p> <p>Please vote to invest in our children's education. Thank you.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>As a long time resident, home owner, tax payer and parent of two children in the Alexandria City Public School system. I am writing to ask you to please Fully Fund ACPS schools to include the much needed adds included by the School Board. Our children have for the most part had very dedicated wonderful teachers in their time with ACPS (now in 9th and 7th grades). However, since COVID, both of my children have at different times started their school years with a TBD instead of a teacher. This year my son and other students who applied and were accepted to the STEM Academy at Minnie Howard started the year with neither a Biology or a Geometry teacher. Only because another dedicated teacher agreed to give up her planning period (which happened to coincide with my son's biology class time) to teach an additional class, did my son have a certified Biology teacher by the 2nd quarter. He also started the year without a Spanish 3 teacher. I've lost count of how many children's parents I've heard from whose children have had to go without qualified teachers this year, and if we do not act to better compensate our teachers and support staff and provide better working conditions, we will continue to lose dedicated teachers. ACPS is hemorrhaging at this point. We have the second highest rate of teachers either retiring or leaving for other districts in the region. The sad part is they are leaving for good reason. As a former educator, I am sorry to say we're I to go back to the classroom tomorrow, I do not think I would choose ACPS. Our most dedicated teachers have a loyalty penalty. They have been repeatedly denied the small step increases they were due and counted on to support themselves and their families. They've been told a myriad of different things to justify this (to the point of actual gaslighting), only to stay loyal and then have colleagues with the exact same amount of years in service get hired from another district and by virtue of being placed on the appropriate step on the salary scale, make up to \$10,000 more dollars a year. Restoring one step as the school board has requested is a gesture, but at least it is a meaningful start that lets our teachers know we do actually value them. The 2%MRA does not keep up with our current 3.1% inflation, but it sure is better than nothing! Adding another dean of students to GWMS will bring the case load for each dean more toward about 500 students, certainly a great need, especially with the increase in behavioral issues since COVID. These are urgent needs! Were you to say the School Board and ACPS Central Office need to do some audits and do better long term planning and get on with things in a myriad of different ways, I would agree. First and foremost though, I think they are long overdue in valuing and retaining our vital boots on the ground employees in the schools. This is not the time to drop the ball. At least the School Board has stepped up and tried to do something to stop the steady stream of good teachers walking out the door. It's a start. I understand this is a tough year for the city budget. I also understand it's an election year. As someone on disability, it isn't easy for my family to pay our real estate taxes. However, I'd rather pay more in taxes than have to feel like every year I'm rolling the dice on whether my children will have teachers to teach them when they go to school in the fall. I'd rather have better teacher working conditions which are also student learning conditions. I'd rather have enough deans at the middle school and resources to help those children in the most need than the violence now in our schools. I understand this is a tough decision, but I implore you to fully fund the school board's budget for ACPS! Thank you.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>My kids are Alexandria public school students. Below are some of the reasons why they should be fully funding the school board budget.</p> <p>Our schools are facing overcrowding issues, leading to large class sizes and overcapacity buildings. It's imperative that we prioritize modernization and expansion to provide a better learning environment for our students. We live in a high income highly desirable area and we need to make sure that supporting our schools to the fullest extent is priority number one.</p> <p>Our dedicated teachers have been steadfast through challenging times, yet many have gone years without a raise to keep up with inflation. They deserve step increases as a reward for their loyalty and dedication to our kids and schools.</p> <p>We're losing valuable educators every year because they simply can't afford to live in our city. It's essential to offer competitive salaries and benefits to retain our current teachers and attract new ones to support our growing student population. The teacher pipeline is shrinking, and we need to compete with neighboring areas in Northern VA, DC and MD to ensure we have high-quality educators in our schools.</p> <p>Research shows that adequate funding directly correlates with student success. Every \$1,000 increase in per student spending is associated with higher graduation rates and increased higher education attainment.</p> <p>While I'm sure taxes will have to be raised in order to pay for this budget I urge you really think about and prioritize what matters most which is our children's education.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I am writing to share my concern about the school funding for next year. I realize that this is a challenging budget year, but as a parent of two school aged children and a long term teacher (in a different district) I can't stay silent. Schools are the foundation of a community and Alexandria is not an exception. The City Council needs to prioritize the school budget and fully fund the school board's budget.</p> <p>This budget will need to address the overcrowding in our schools. Overcrowding leads to larger class sizes, which makes it more challenging for teachers to support all their students. Additionally, we need to raise teachers' salaries to help make it more competitive. Teachers are leaving to better paid districts or districts that have better working conditions. Full funding is essential to attract high-quality educators. We must offer competitive salaries to retain and recruit the best teachers for our students.</p> <p>The PTAC shared some compelling information about Per Pupil Spending in Alexandria. Despite complex student needs, ACPS receives lower funding compared to neighboring jurisdictions. We must prioritize adequate funding for our students. If we increase funding, it can bridge the opportunity gap for all students, ensuring that every child, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, receives a high-quality education. Our children are watching. Fully fund this school board budget next year!</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Christina Danbury</p>

Date Received	Comment
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Please fully fund the full proposed ACPS budget.</p> <p>I recognize that the city is facing a difficult year. However, without a strong public school system we run the risk of negatively impacting the entire city. Engaged, inspiring teachers keep students engaged and reaching their full potential. We are facing a nationwide teacher shortage and every year it is harder to both recruit and retain teachers in ACPS. We must remain competitive with the surrounding jurisdictions in order to keep our teachers in Alexandria, all of whom are proposing significant cost of living, step, or even bonuses for years of service.</p> <p>My family has lived in Alexandria for 10 years and have been an ACPS family for the past 6 years. We have been lucky that in all but one year my children have had qualified teachers leading their classes and helping them to grow. We have also been sad to watch a beloved teacher leave each year to take a job closer to where they live at a school with more manageable class sizes. The ACPS vacancy rate went from 2.8% for 2022-2023 to 6.6% for the 2023-2024 school year. I'm afraid to hear how high that number will go by 2024-2025 if we don't competitively and fairly compensate our staff. The school board approved market rate adjustment of 2% is critical to keep Alexandria in line with what the surrounding jurisdictions are proposing.</p> <p>In order to keep our city strong and enticing to both people and businesses, we need to keep our school system strong by fully funding its needs. Underfunded schools will lead to higher dropout rates, lower performance on state testing (leading to lower desirability to live in Alexandria), increased social service needs, and reduced workforce readiness. Please help keep Alexandria a thriving city long term by fully funding our schools.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>WE NEED TO FULLY FUND THE ENTIRE ACPS BUDGET REQUEST:</p> <p>Data and lived experiences show we need to address overcrowding (large class sizes and over capacity) through modernization/expansion of our buildings. Teachers who stayed through the past several years at the same salary despite inflation deserve to have raises through step increase. Every year teachers leave ACPS to take jobs closer to their homes because they can't afford to live in our city. We need to attract new teachers for growing student population and stay competitive as the teacher pipeline is smaller than ever & NOVA is a competitive hiring area for high-quality educators. As 80% of the ACPS operating budget goes toward staff benefits and salaries, full funding enables ACPS to offer a strong benefits to recruit excellent educators.</p> <p>There is a strong correlation between adequate funding and student success (FUNDING IMPACTS EDUCATION SUCCESS! Research shows a \$1,000 increase in per student spending associates with 2.3% higher graduation rates and a 6.5% increase in higher education attainment. We need to address equity and access in the city. Increased funding will help bridge the opportunity gap for all students, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status, and ensure that every student has access to a high-quality education.</p> <p>Additional funding will support special education programs and services for students with disabilities. Increased funding will enable schools to provide individualized support, accommodations, and resources to meet the diverse needs of all students. Adequately funded schools contribute to economic development, retain property values, and overall community well-being by attracting families, businesses, and investment to the area. Schools play a critical role in promoting public health and safety, especially in recent challenges such as COVID-19. Adequate funding to support health, mental health, and safety not only addresses the social-emotional needs of students but also their families who live, work, and shop in Alexandria. If we continue to underfund our public schools there are costs: higher dropout rates, increased social services, and reduced workforce readiness.</p> <p>ACPS students have MORE complex needs than its neighboring jurisdictions, yet our per pupil spending is lower or only slightly higher than neighboring jurisdictions. 36.2% of ACPS students are English Language Learners (ELL) and 54.4% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch.*</p> <p>With the exception of Manassas Park City, Alexandria City's public schools receive the LOWEST funding allocation of City or County revenue in Northern Virginia. City Council allocates approximately just 30% of its revenue to ACPS. In comparison, Fairfax County allocates 52% of its revenue to its public schools. Arlington contributes approximately 41% of its general fund to its school system. Fairfax County contributes 52% of its general fund to its school system.</p> <p>Full funding of ACPS' capital budget will increase school capacity, which is needed since the City Council is focused on increasing affordable housing development within Alexandria. Also, there are no plans to address the middle school capacity situation. Increasing capacity for George Mason & Cora Kelly may provide a future answer to this problem.</p> <p>Full funding will modernize aging school facilities and promote a stable teacher workforce. This will enhance ACPS' reputation and encourage families who opted out to return to ACPS.</p> <p>Full funding of the ACPS budget is necessary to attract/retain educators. The ACPS budget includes an ~4.85% salary increase for eligible ACPS staff while Fairfax County Public Schools Superintendent is proposing a 6% salary increase.</p> <p>The ACPS budget proposed by the City Manager (the Superintendent's budget without the SB add-ons) will not offer any salary increases for staff, which will make ACPS non-competitive - ALL neighboring jurisdictions are offering cost of living increases to its staff.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Dear Mayor Wilson, esteemed members of the Alexandria City Council, and Mr. Parajon,</p> <p>I hope this message finds you well. As a longstanding resident of Alexandria and a member of the School Board's Budget Advisory Committee (BAC), I want to bring an important matter to your attention.</p> <p>Our schools are undeniably the backbone of our community. They play a vital role in shaping the future of Alexandria. However, it's crucial to recognize that the City of Alexandria serves as the primary funding source for ACPS, with teacher compensation representing a significant portion of the budget. Investing in our educators is crucial for the success of our students and, by extension, our community as a whole.</p> <p>I understand that meeting the School Board's approved budget may require difficult decisions, such as potential service cuts or tax adjustments. However, I firmly believe that these investments are necessary to ensure the continued success of our schools and the prosperity of our community.</p> <p>While the BAC typically refrains from advocating for specific budget requests, I feel compelled to emphasize the importance of this matter. We must ensure that our community is informed about the challenges facing our schools and the need for continued investment in their success.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that together, we can work towards ensuring the continued excellence of Alexandria City Public Schools and the wellbeing of our community.</p> <p>Warm regards, Abdulahi Abdalla Alexandria Resident</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I urge the city council to fully adopt the School Board's budget including cost of living increases so ACPS educators stay in ACPS. We have two daughters in ACPS who's education has suffered from teacher and staff vacancies over the past couple of years. Multiple classes taught by poorly paid long term subs at both ACHS and GW middle school. Our daughter receiving has been without an occupational therapist for much of the year - a service that ACPS is federally mandated to provide under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). ACPS schools are the most important service that Alexandria provides and a major reason people want to live here. Teachers and other staff need to be retained with competitive salaries.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I am in favor of the additions that the School Board made. If they cannot be achieved this year, I propose the following: prioritize COLA and staff additions; create a joint city-school committee to address creative solutions to the loyalty penalty; work together as a city to focus specifically on school conditions, autonomy, and respect now. The exodus of teachers is widening the gap between our haves and have nots and creating a community closer to the Neo-Confederate days of the early 20th century than the Neo-Progressive ideals we think we embody. Are we a community or are we not?</p> <p>I want to briefly explain some of the nuances behind steps and compensation. ACPS is competitive regionally; this is true. But the region is not competitive with similar, expensive regions. Therefore, unlike the 2010s, when pay was competitive and there was a massive recession with high unemployment, we will always struggle to get quality candidates in this entire region; hence, the vacancies even in Arlington, which consistently attracts teachers due to its reputation. Further, Alexandria is more difficult to teach in due to the massive influx of a refugee population that is not supported, no alternative programs for students who consistently show they do not want to be in our traditional school (including via shocking misbehaviors), and lack of support and collaboration between city and school leaders and institutions.</p> <p>Regarding the steps, the entire region froze steps during the post-Recession era. This meant that teachers who stay in one district make markedly less than teachers who jump around and are given their full experience. ACPS is not alone in doing this. ACPS is also not alone in not addressing the fact that they did this. Teaching is not alone in doing this either; the federal government did the same. But once the economic recovery of the late Obama years occurred, other sectors mitigated these moves. Our school districts ignored it. Last year, our CFO moved the entire scale upwards by implementing a COLA or MRA adjustment of over 5 percent. But to do so, he also kept teachers on the same step. This exacerbated the "loyalty penalty." Before, if a new teacher came in and was on STEP 12 (for thirteen years experience), they made 8,000 dollars more than me at STEP 9 (three years frozen). Now, it is difference of 4 steps and around 12,000 dollars. In fact, FCPS is copying this move this year. But they can afford to do it because they are larger and offer a large supplemental retirement plan (.8 versus our .4, which is also generous compared to Arlington) and they offer more advancement opportunities.</p> <p>So far, the debate has not focused on the specifics I mention above: regionally we aren't competitive and nobody has addressed even creative solutions to the loyalty penalty. Further, we haven't been able to talk specifically as legislative or leadership or fiduciary bodies about school conditions other than to speak of sunshine and SROs. The benefits are good but they are marginally better and cheaper than Fairfax, where there are way more opportunities to find a good fit as a teacher and housing is cheaper on the outskirts. I hear no specifics; I hear talk of teachers as if they are cogs in a machine, not protectors of our children.</p> <p>Therefore, as an ELL teacher in a district that has double the percentage of ELLs than the next closest adjacent district, and more coming every day, I believe that it is prudent to support fully funding the request that the School Board made. The urgency required in this situation cannot be understated; This will be the legacy of the current city council and city manager: A divided city and fractured communities of haves and have nots.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Please fully fund the ACPS school budget. It's one of the most fundamental building blocks of a healthy city—investing in our future citizens, and attracting new citizens. Our teachers and students deserve the city's investment and we need to do all we can to retain and attract excellent teachers.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Dear Members of the City Council,</p> <p>I'm a concerned ACPS staff member who is here to advocate for the critical need to fully fund our public schools. I have witnessed firsthand the invaluable impact that dedicated teachers have on the lives of our children. However, it is becoming increasingly challenging to attract and retain qualified educators, who all require degrees to teach - with some talented teachers choosing to leave for opportunities in other cities.</p> <p>To provide our students with the educational experience they deserve, it is essential that we prioritize investments in staffing and salary competitiveness. The budget the school board recently approved, and which is up for your consideration, does so. By adequately staffing our schools and offering competitive salaries, we can attract and retain talented educators who are dedicated to nurturing the academic growth of our students</p> <p>It is crucial that we prioritize investment in education to provide our schools with the resources necessary to support and retain high-quality educators, increase staffing levels, and ensure that our teachers and support staff receive competitive salaries. By fully funding the proposed budget for our school district, we can demonstrate our commitment to valuing and supporting our teachers, thereby fostering a stable and thriving educational environment for our students. Please vote to invest in our children's education.</p> <p>Thank you, Dr. Brianne Mintern, ACPS School Psychologist</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Please issue the market increase for teacher salaries!!! We already have a problem with having enough staff and we don't want to lose those we do have!!!</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I'm writing to express my support of the council advertising a higher residential tax rate so that you have all options on the table as you consider the final FY 2025 budget. We need a way to find more money to pay our teachers and school staff. If our schools suffer, our city will suffer. We also need to prioritize working class families and anti-displacement measures, including ensuring we continue to fund approved affordable housing projects in the pipeline. We also can't cut services, especially those that serve low-income and working class community members including keeping DASH bus transit available and fare free.</p> <p>Increased residential taxes isn't a permanent solution, but in the absence of new development bringing in significant revenue, as a community we have to make hard, necessary choices for this year. I urge you to consider that many in this community, including myself, can absorb additional residential tax increases. I hope that you will consider a tax increase with additional measures to ameliorate the impact of tax increases on our city's most vulnerable who could be displaced by a tax increase.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I'm here to express my strong support for fully funding our public schools and approving the ACPS school board-approved budget. As a member of this community and a parent, I believe that investing in education is essential for the well-being and future success of our children and our city as a whole.</p> <p>My son is excited to go to school every day, to learn and engage with his teachers and other ACPS who support him and his classmates. Fully funding ACPS will help to show his teachers that we value and support them, as well as ensure my son and other Alexandria City children continue to have highly qualified and capable teachers to educate them.</p> <p>It is crucial that our schools have the resources they need to provide quality education, support our teachers, and meet the diverse needs of our students. By fully funding the proposed ACPS budget, we can ensure that our children receive the education they deserve and that our community continues to thrive.</p> <p>I urge you to prioritize education funding. Investing in our children's education is an investment in the future prosperity of our city.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my views on this important matter.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Please support a third Dean of Students at GW Middle School so that students can have one dean per grade level. Right now, there is one dean to handle 700 students. That is not only impossible but it is unsafe for the entire school community. A third dean would reduce this number to one dean for roughly 460 students, which is still a herculean task. Student behavior affects learning in the building every day and GWMS does not have the minimum resources it needs.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>It is imperative that the ACPS budget for 2024-25 be fully funded. As teachers, we face many issues. The most important being overcrowding in our schools, teacher retention, and raises for teachers. We must put the students needs first and that means fully funding the budget.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Please consider fully funding our schools. I am one of the teachers in ACPS who have worked in the city for an extended amount of time. Despite my commitment to teaching students in the city for that long, I have seen step freezes or even a half-step increase for different years. I am behind in my years on the step scale. A teacher who may not have been committed to ACPS and have the same number of years of experience are coming into ACPS making more money than I do.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Dear Sir/Madam,</p> <p>I fully support the 2025 school budget. Respectfully Mr. Gray</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I am an ACPS teacher. I want the step for all teachers that froze a step in '21 and a 2% market rate adjustment.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Dear City Council,</p> <p>I am the art teacher at Naomi L. Brooks (12 years) and William Ramsay (1 year) plus a 6 year veteran at Mt. Vernon Community School. I have been a resident of Del Ray for 25 years.</p> <p>I am writing to ask you to support the additions to the ACPS budget that include a restoration of a step and a 2% market rate adjustment. It is very difficult for teachers to afford living here in Alexandria and there has been a marked increase in the cost of living. Mid-level teachers have had their steps frozen many times over the years, but if they left ACPS for another district, they would receive higher pay. We have seen lots of teachers leave for this reason, and morale is at the lowest I have ever seen.</p> <p>Thank you so much for considering this and helping to support our teachers! Sincerely, Luisa Tio</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Good Evening City Council Members,</p> <p>Thank you for your diligent efforts to support education in Alexandria City. As both a resident and an employee of the city, I urge you to reconsider the ACPS Budget proposal to include step restoration and a COLA. In my 6 years with ACPS, I have only moved 2 steps. While there have been other adjustments to pay scales, this is very disheartening considering my years of experience. Additionally, the Teacher Salary Comparison Tool sent Friday by Dominic Turner (CFO) was misleading and felt like it was meant to make staff feel as if they should be grateful to be paid what we are. This tool does not reflect what I would get if I left to go to another district where I would be hired with my full years of experience to my true step. Additionally, ACPS has a very unique demographic and system with its one challenges. We need to incentivize teachers to stay at our schools in order to best serve our students. Please consider restoring steps for teachers and giving a cost of living adjustment to let our teachers know that they are valued and supported. Our work matters.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I am writing as an Alexandria resident and parent of two ACPS students. I'm asking you to please fully fund the ACPS School Board's FY 2025 budget request. It is essential that the city offer competitive wages to the teachers and staff, especially as the city transitions to the new high school concept. My current eighth grader recently commented that he has had at least one new teacher every year since kindergarten. Alexandria City and ACPS must find a way to retain highly qualified teachers, by increasing salaries and providing safe and supportive working conditions. I work for a neighboring public school district and always thought I would consider transferring to ACPS to be closer to home and give back to my community. I would not consider it now because as a special educator, my district recognizes the workload and pays us for an extended day. Making the switch to ACPS would lower my pay. There are not enough teachers to replace those who leave, so please value the teachers and staff who are currently committed to teaching our children by fully funding the ACPS Schools Board's budget request.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>I support the adjustment to the budget that would restore a frozen step for teachers as well as a 2% market rate adjustment. With the teacher shortage, we cannot afford to not compensate our current teachers. In addition, with inflation, 2% market rate adjustment is the least we should be giving.</p>
Monday, March 11, 2024	<p>Thank you for giving me this time. I'm a Parent/PTA Member who needed to speak out about the pressing need for increased staffing and competitive salaries within our public schools to ensure that our students receive the highest quality education in the region.</p> <p>I'm among many in the community who are invested in the success and well-being of our students. However, it has become increasingly evident that our schools are facing challenges in attracting and retaining qualified staff due to inadequate compensation and staffing levels.</p> <p>Our elementary school, Naomi Brooks, has lost numerous teachers in the last few years. My daughter had a teacher not return from maternity leave 2 years in a row. This meant that 2 years in a row she had a teacher for a few weeks, then a long-term sub, then a permanent teacher (which we were beyond fortunate to find). In addition, my son at GWMS didn't have a math teacher for the first month of the school year. In a post-covid world, our young kids need extra support and stability from teachers and we can't ensure that they get this without prioritizing investments in staffing salary and competitiveness.</p> <p>To provide our students with the educational experience they deserve, it is essential that we prioritize investments in staffing and salary competitiveness. The budget the school board recently approved, and which is up for your consideration, does so. By adequately staffing our schools and offering competitive salaries, we can attract and retain talented educators who are dedicated to nurturing the academic growth of our students.</p> <p>I urge you to allocate resources towards increasing staffing levels and ensuring that our teachers and support staff receive competitive salaries. If you do so, you will not only be helping our students but you will be ensuring that our city continues to thrive. Our children are our future, so let's give them the best education possible. I'm ready. Are you?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>As an Alexandrian with 4 kids at ACPS and owner of multiple properties in Alexandria, please fully fund ACPS with the increases requested by School Board. We NEED to keep our teachers and they are telling us they need the COLA and a step to stay and feel appreciated. They deserve it. There are great teachers in ACPS and with the shortages, many are happy to jump to neighboring jurisdictions where they will get more money and step restoration. Teachers are being asked to do more and more and they deserve compensation for it.</p> <p>Also, we need the additional staff members and the updated facilities.. Alexandria is very diverse (great for the community) and unfortunately, ACPS is shouldering a higher burden of ELL and low income students than neighboring jurisdictions. This means our school system requires greater resources than neighboring jurisdictions and this requires funds.</p> <p>Blaming the school board or blaming the council does nothing for our kids. Pointing fingers about poor planning and saying no out of spite does nothing for our kids. We are where we are, and our kids, our schools and our teachers NEED the additional funds.</p> <p>There are hard decisions coming about where to spend our money but it should never be at the expense of students and teachers. Raise the taxes and fully fund ACPS.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear City Council Members,</p> <p>We have appreciated the City's support over the years for our organization, ALIVE! I have been a volunteer for 20 years and a past President.</p> <p>I understand how tight the City budget is but I urge you to give an additional \$200k for our work assisting our neighbors in need.</p> <p>We will not be able to keep the Food/assistance Hubs operational without it. These Hubs have made a tremendous difference to our residents in need. The biggest benefit is the "Navigator" we have at both locations.</p> <p>So many residents do not have a Case worker and don't know how to access the assistance they need to avoid evictions, avoid utility cut offs, get job training etc. The "Navigator" approach is much less threatening to them and has proven to be a success.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of this request and all you are doing so well.</p> <p>Kind regards, Joan Moser 703-203-9236 16 Bakers Walk #204 Alexandria, VA 22314</p> <p>Joanmoser1947@gmail.com</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>-Speakers -Colorful Lights -Tissues</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Hello, I would like to talk about my experience with Alexandria City High School. My name is Hagar Abougenina and I am a high school senior. Since I came to school, I have not found any difficulty in obtaining school supplies, such as pens, notebooks, etc. The school also provides free food for those who are unable to do so. Due to the large number of students and the huge increase in students, especially those coming from outside the country, the school may find it difficult to provide them with all the necessary supplies. I think it is important to provide an additional budget to provide basic things. School is an important place and we do not want students to feel that they are not supported. Thanks for your time.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I would for a whole grade trip to somewhere</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>We need field trips</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Please include pbis for funding next year and allowing us(2025) to have more field trips, its our last year !</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>we need more events and fun field trips</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Hola mi nombre es Yeri Amaya y soy un alumno de la escuela ACPS y ya muchas cosas que se deben mejorar como lo es el mantenimiento de los baño , mejorar la calidad de la comida estar más al pendiente de los alumnos tener más ayuda con conseguirá poner más consejeros dar más tiempo en los lunch ofrecer más ayuda a los alumnos mejorar el material didáctico .</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Hola mi nombre es Yeri Amaya y soy un alumno de la escuela ACPS y ya muchas cosas que se deben mejorar como lo es el mantenimiento de los baño , mejorar la calidad de la comida estar más al pendiente de los alumnos tener más ayuda con conseguirá poner más consejeros dar más tiempo en los lunch ofrecer más ayuda a los alumnos mejorar el material didáctico .</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>the budget needs to be better! students are failing due to lack of funds and resources</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I'm deeply concerned about school funding. Our schools are hitting a tipping point and I'm concerned a few more years of difficult working conditions and non-competitive pay will leave us past the event horizon.</p> <p>Though ACPS benefits might be excellent, that does not make up for the fact that we are constantly falling behind in salary. The step freezes in the past have created a massive loyalty penalty for our dedicated and seasoned teachers, the ones we most need to stay for their abilities. This has to be fixed.</p> <p>I am a former FCPS teacher. I was well trained and fully certified when I entered the classroom at 22 years old. However, no teacher training can make up for classroom experience, the only thing that will truly teach classroom management. These are the teachers we are at most at risk of losing and are bleeding to other local districts or to the private sector. We can't continue to replace experienced teachers with new ones and expect a strong school system.</p> <p>I would recommend a progressive property tax increase based on property values to help close the gap. No one benefits from a school system under threat of collapse.</p> <p>Thank you</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Fully fund the School Board proposed budget for teacher salary increases.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>In protest against the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted, please don't fund the School Board's request for two additional AASTs. The time of the existing AASTs is a valuable resource which is being misallocated. AASTs are specifically trained to serve the gifted, but AAST time is being wasted in general classrooms full of students who demonstrate no gifted behaviors. Meanwhile, many students actually identified as gifted are going unserved by AASTs. Demand that ACPS come into compliance with Virginia regulations for the education of the gifted by allocating AAST time to educating students identified as gifted. Fix the Local Plan for the Education of the Gifted. Cluster gifted students under existing AASTs now!</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I'm writing to express my strong support for fully funding our public schools and approving the superintendent's proposed budget. As a member of this community and the parent of a student at Alexandria City High School, I believe that investing in education is essential for the well-being and future success of our children and our city as a whole.</p> <p>For a substantial portion of his first year of high school, my son has not had a full slate of teachers. He was missing a biology teacher for several months when school started, and then, shortly after one was finally hired, his Spanish teacher resigned. It took several months until another Spanish teacher could be hired, and as a result, my son now feels he has fallen too far behind to continue in Spanish next year.</p> <p>My understanding is that there is currently no teacher for AP Computer Science A, and no applicants for the position. As a result, my son did not ask to register for this class next year, although he would have otherwise been interested in it. There is also currently no teacher for DE Math courses, and therefore, we do not know whether ACPS will be able to provide my son with any math instruction whatsoever after his sophomore year, when he will have completed AP BC Calculus. It seems to me that these positions would be difficult to fill under the best of circumstances, since they require the teacher to have an advanced degree in the subject. We are not operating under the best of circumstances, however. How can Alexandria City High School have a viable STEM academy if ACPS cannot hire math and computer science instructors?</p> <p>It is crucial that we prioritize investment in education to provide our schools with the resources necessary to support and retain high-quality educators. By fully funding the proposed budget for our school district, we can demonstrate our commitment to valuing and supporting our teachers, thereby fostering a stable and thriving educational environment for our students. I urge you to prioritize education funding. Investing in our children's education is an investment in the future prosperity of our city.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my views on this important matter.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>As an Alexandria resident, an ACPS, teacher, and an ACPS parent, I am writing to help you understand that it is absolutely imperative that you fully funded the budget. Because of my short commute, and my desire to work in my own community, I can honestly say that, as it stands right now, I am not going anywhere. However, what is happening to me and other veteran teachers is that the burden of the revolving door that is ACPS has fallen squarely on our shoulders. The core of each school is shrinking and shrinking and, soon, there will be no experts left. No one with the necessary institutional knowledge. No one that can show you how to shake up the toner cartridge to get a few more copies or how to set up a Donors Choose project because your classroom budget for the year is less than \$200. No one who knows the community resources. No one who knows that different zip codes align with different needs. I am past the midpoint in my career and I don't see a new class of teachers stepping up and taking over. What I see instead is young teachers and career switchers getting burnt out almost immediately, leaving mid year at rates never seen before and, often, leaving the field entirely. The work is endless, thankless and seems to be getting more and more out of control as community needs are left under addressed and teachers have to take on extra roles as social workers, nutritionists, and personal shoppers. The least you can do is pay all of us what is owed and what we were contracted to receive. Then, after you do that, you can stop saying phrases that begin with "The School Board is an elected body..." as a way to deflect responsibility for the broken communities these kids are coming to us from, nowhere near ready to learn.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I have been an Alexandria resident and voter for 12 years. I have a son at GW Middle School, and I strongly support the City Council fully funding ACPS' budget request. Our teachers and students need our help. We need to retain our teachers and ensure they are adequately compensated for everything they do to support our students and our community. I am shocked that there is more debate about the new arena than what we are doing to support the next generation of Alexandria residents who are learning in overcrowded classrooms. Please support our schools.</p> <p>Sincerely, Jennifer</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>As a parent with two elementary students in ACPS, I am writing to urge the City Council to "fully" fund the ACPS budget. I am speaking out now, for the first time, because I believe our city is facing an existential question: Do we want Alexandria to be a place where families can live and send their kids to public school to receive an education?</p> <p>Funding the augmented budget is not a question of excess, lavish benefits, or luxury. To be clear, passing the budget with the School Board additions is a grasp at the bare minimum needed to avert a massive exodus of teachers—and students, whose families have the resources to pay for private education. Fully funding our schools would take a lot more; this version of the budget still leaves many critical positions like counseling services and Advanced Academic Services positions unfunded/unfilled.</p> <p>We cannot look at this question in a vacuum. Our neighboring districts including Arlington and Fairfax both have more compelling teacher raises on the table. NOT acting will be knowingly ceding remaining talent to these districts with arguably less challenging demographics/socioeconomics. Despite Alexandria students' complex needs, our per pupil spending is lower (or in one exception, slightly higher) than neighboring jurisdictions. You allocate just 30% of the city budget to the school system; in Fairfax it is 52%.</p> <p>To address a couple legitimate concerns:</p> <p>1. I acknowledge that the city balance sheet needs to add up. In my view, a chance at functioning schools should be our top priority as a city. Make sacrifices—cut free public transportation, raise taxes, make tough decisions regarding expanding our commercial tax base—because failing schools will have far worse consequences.</p> <p>2. I do believe there are systemic issues with how the ACPS central office is running the district. They have shown a concerning lack of focus, for example focusing on logos over filling vacant classrooms and choosing layers of administration over support to those in the schools on the front lines. This failure of leadership should be addressed, but not fully funding the budget only hurts those keeping things afloat vice those responsible for the rising waters.</p> <p>Thank you for your time, thoughtful consideration, and all you do for this incredible city.</p> <p>Arin Keyser</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear Members of the City Council,</p> <p>I'm here to express my strong support for fully funding our public schools and approving the ACPS school board-approved budget. As a member of this community and a parent, resident and taxpayer, I believe that investing in education is essential for the well-being and future success of our children and our city as a whole.</p> <p>I am a product of public schools that had great teachers and those teachers led me into the profession of teaching and policy. My children benefit from the diverse community at ACPS and high quality teachers. It is crucial that our schools have the resources they need to provide quality education, support our teachers, and meet the diverse needs of our students. By fully funding the proposed ACPS budget, we can ensure that our children receive the education they deserve and that our community continues to thrive.</p> <p>I urge you to prioritize education funding. Investing in our children's education is an investment in the future prosperity of our city.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my views on this important matter.</p> <p>Best, Julia Martin Eile, Del Ray, VA</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear City Council,</p> <p>I am a 24 year veteran teacher of ACPS and work at the ACHS King St. campus. I am writing to urge you to do whatever needs to be done to support the ACPS Superintendent's proposed 2025 budget. I have seen too many of the best teachers leave ACPS over the years for Arlington because of better pay and working conditions. If you look at the current vacancy rates of Alexandria, and Arlington, you'll see that ACPS is having a difficult time retaining and recruiting the best teachers. A high quality, regionally respected school system is fundamental to maintaining a strong City and community.</p> <p>I have enjoyed my career in ACPS, and have always felt that the City has supported the school system, but recently it seems that it has been slipping. Please support at least a COLA and a Step increase in pay for all ACPS employees to ensure that teachers feel valued and continue to put in the extra work that the job demands to meet the many challenging needs of our students as we emerge from the difficulties presented by the pandemic. An investment in the school system is an investment in the full recovery of the City of Alexandria.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Patrick Earle Science Teacher ACHS King St. Campus</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>From the perspective of a parent with a student at ACHS, City Council and the City Manager should fully fund ACPS now please.</p> <p>City leaders need to work with our teachers, nurses, social workers, counselors and building admins to provide stronger support for the schools in order to educate our students.</p> <p>We need less red tape from ACPS Central Office, better pay and competitive benefits to retain our school staff since we are losing good educators to other school systems.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Hello! We are a military family who moved here when our children were very young. We fell in love with the area and its people. We were given the opportunity to buy a home we jumped on the chance. We are very close to retirement and considering where we want to put down roots after the military. Our children and their education is a top priority when choosing where to retire. It is incredibly frustrating that ACPS public schools have so many issues. We believe that strong, fully staffed and safe public schools should be a priority for our city officials. Strong schools are vital to a thriving community. We should not be losing great teachers to other districts, our students should have access to top notch resources, our school buildings and facilities should be up to date and not lacking in maintenance, our children should be safe and protected while at school and our schools should not be struggling to meet the social and emotional needs of children at all levels. The parents in our community should not feel forced to send their children to private schools. This all requires more money. Public schools should be a top priority in the budget.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>The children are our future. It's time to fund the people who help shape our children into who they will become.</p> <p>I have a daughter, and honestly the money raised to improve the lives of the staff in the school system won't impact her. She'll have graduated by the time the impact is really felt.</p> <p>As a long time resident and homeowner (who will end up impacted by the necessary tax increase), it only makes logical sense for the long term growth of the city.</p> <p>From an economic standpoint, there are multiple reasons. Employers want an educated workforce. To educate the workforce, you need good schools. Good schools also provide opportunities for our youth to succeed.</p> <p>From a quality of life view, areas with higher education levels tend to have less crime. (Another thing that employers and employees look for.)</p> <p>It is a difficult decision to raise taxes, especially in an election year. However, it's time to put actions to our words. Show our children that we are serious about the future of our beautiful city. Give the teachers and staff a tangible demonstration of the respect they have earned.</p> <p>Fund the Future - Fund the schools.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>More trips and events</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>As an Alexandria resident and property owner and as a parent of two children in Alexandria City Public Schools I ask that you fully fund the School Board's approved operating budget.</p> <p>The sole difference between the superintendent's budget request which was included in the City budget and the portion of the school board's approved budget that was not included in the City budget is teacher salaries. That's it, that's the only difference. By not including teacher salaries in the city budget you are sending a very clear message to teachers that they are not valued, whether you mean it or not.</p> <p>In 2022, Virginia ranked 22 in the nation for teacher pay, behind DC at 4 and Maryland at 9. Also in 2022, Alexandria's average teacher pay was lower than our neighboring districts of Arlington and Falls Church. The districts where five of my children's teachers went last year. Nationally, teacher vacancy rates are on the rise, and Alexandria is contributing to that rise, to the detriment of Alexandria's children.</p> <p>The School Board's approved budget will require either cuts to services in the City or increasing residential property taxes. As a property owner, I am asking you to consider a moderate tax increase or some sort of reorganization of funds to be able to invest in the future of our youth and the future of our City.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Alexandria City Council MUST support the ACPS School Board Approved Budget with the Adds. I am lucky enough to be able to be a homeowner in Alexandria City, and have two girls in 6th and 8th grades at GWMS. We live near Alexandria City Highschool.</p> <p>For years we have witnessed overcrowded schools, a severely frustrating redistricting that impacted logistics, roads and teachers; lack of substitutes; classes canceled for lack of staff; issues with communications and more. All because of the amazing teachers and inschool administrators/staff that we have are overburdened and lacking resources to serve our unique community while they can't afford to live here!</p> <p>Over 60% of our schools are 50 years old, and most over 70 years old. Our schools are crowded, and ACPS students have more complex needs than its neighboring jurisdictions. 36%+ of ACPS students are English Language Learners (ELL) and 55% qualifying for free and reduced lunch. THIS is one of the richest counties in VA.</p> <p>We try to support our teachers the BEST we can, yet it's not enough. We need more family liasons for our kids to succeed, we need counselors (especially as this money is expiring) - we have one Family and Engagment Center (FACE) family liason at GWMS who is more than amazing, yet supports over 1500 kids and families, let alone staff!</p> <p>With all of these unique, complex issues - why is City Council even considering underfunding our teachers? Since Covid the school community of need has escalated, special needs are the norm - we are a rich community, PLEASE FULLY FUND ACPS!</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I am writing to urge the City Council to adopt the full budget proposed by Alexandria City Public Schools Board, including increases in teacher pay and facilities modernization. I understand that budgets are a series of trade-offs. Budgets also reflect our values and priorities. You cannot support the growth this city is undergoing without an increase in resources. We should not be proud that taxes have not been raised for several years and at the same time expect better outcomes from city services. I support a tax increase for our schools.</p> <p>I urge you to adopt the ACPS School Board budget and my main concerns are as follows:</p> <p>Class size, retention and excellence - We must become competitive with other jurisdictions and we have work to do to catch up. ACPS lags neighbors in class sizes and teacher pay. What is the impact on student performance and outcomes if we have - and continue to allow - high teacher turn-over? Retention is an active process, not just letting the district suffer the effects of the market. Staff ratios in Alexandria are higher than the neighboring jurisdictions. I do not understand how this is acceptable to the City when all the science shows that smaller classes are critical in early grades. The approved ratio is 24 students in 2nd grade - my daughter's 2nd grade class has 26 students. Although the official enrollment data says there are 58 students in 2nd grade for two classes at George Mason Elementary.</p> <p>ONE teacher for 26 students is very challenging, particularly in early grades as many of the kids are still getting used to what it means to be in school. The kids in my daughter's class speak five different languages at home. We had the same experience in her first grade class. The declining enrollment tells a misleading story for George Mason. Our current enrollment is 345 students, yet a small school does not necessarily lead to small class sizes. It also does not show how GMES has taken city-wide programs and children that move to the district mid-year. I urge you to resource around these issues rather than making a blanket policy that GMES is under-enrolled, but not sending additional teacher and support resources when additional students arrive.</p> <p>Please increase resources to retain quality teachers and reduce class sizes.</p> <p>Upgrade facilities - we have aging buildings. My children's school George Mason Elementary has been a priority to rebuild for several years and it keeps being put off. I fear that the proposed cut in funding to the GMES rebuild will again delay a new building. We need to create a better learning environment as well as a healthier and safer place for our children. Although my current 5th and 2nd graders will not benefit from a new building I still support an increase in taxes to support the building.</p> <p>If resources are constrained and the city does not want to build a bigger building for GMES, please know that you are ignoring the next round of redistricting and all the families moving into our neighborhood that want to go to GMES. The city studied and spent considerable time planning the appropriate size for a new building. Please do not further delay the rebuild. We are suffering years of deferred maintenance because GMES is next on the list for a new building. It is not equitable for all the children and families that go to GMES.</p> <p>Thank you for your public service to our city and our schools. ACPS Parent and Taxpayer, Kate Eltrich</p>

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Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Alexandria City Council MUST support the ACPS School Board Approved Budget with the Adds. I am lucky enough to be able to be a homeowner in Alexandria City, and have two girls in 6th and 8th grades at GWMS. We live near Alexandria City Highschool.</p> <p>For years we have witnessed overcrowded schools, a severely frustrating redistricting that impacted logistics, roads and teachers; lack of substitutes; classes canceled for lack of staff; issues with communications and more All because the amazing teachers and inschool administrators/staff that we have are overburdened and lacking resources to serve our unique community while they can't afford to live here!</p> <p>Over 60% of our schools are 50 years old, and most over 70 years old. Our schools are crowded, and ACPS students have more complex needs than its neighboring jurisdictions. 36%+ of ACPS students are English Language Learners (ELL) and 55% qualifying for free and reduced lunch. THIS in one of the richest counties in VA.</p> <p>We try to support our teachers the BEST we can, yet it's not enough. We need more family liasons for our kids to succeed, we need counselors (especially as this money is expiring) - we have one Family and Engagment Center (FACE) family liason at GWMS who is more than amazing, yet supports over 1500 kids and families, let alone staff!</p> <p>With all of these unique, complex issues - why is City Council even considering underfunding our teachers? Since Covid the school community of need has escalated, special needs are the norm - we are a rich community, PLEASE FULLY FUND ACPS!</p>
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Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>We as students would like to have field trips and other things that make our school more activities not just for clubs and sports, some students aren't able to go to sports so id like to see more activities in school not just sports and after-school things.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear City Council,</p> <p>I have been a resident of Alexandria for almost seven years. I am also ACPS teacher. After falling in love with Alexandria and its rich culture, history, and diversity, I left DC schools to teach at William Ramsay Elementary School. This year school I transfereed within the school division and I am now a literacy specialist at the International Academy at Alexandria City High School. And I'm here to ask you to support he ACPS budget approved by the school board.</p> <p>I'm among many in the community who are invested in the success and well-being of our students. However, it has become increasingly evident that our schools are facing challenges in attracting and retaining qualified staff due to inadequate compensation and staffing levels.</p> <p>As former West End teacher, I was amazed between the conditions and physical structures (especially playgrounds) between the East End schools near my home and the conditions where I worked. The conditions on the playground during my last year at Ramsay were tough. Students played on dangerous climbing equipment, were exposed to gang graffiti, and students with disabilities were unable to join their more abled bodied peers in important developmentally appropriate recess play.</p> <p>In my time on the West End, my classroom also leaked and had a wasp infestation. It took the assistance of EAA to fix the leak.</p> <p>Knowing that ACPS promised equity for all I stuck it out. My students kept me there. There is something amazing about Alexandria's newest residents (who primarily make up the West End elementary schools, and the International Academies at Hammond Middle School and ACHS).</p> <p>These students deserve the same access to equitable practices as their peers in the same building and across the city. In order to do this students needdedicated programs, program specific administrators, extra language support specialist, as well as counselors and social workers that can help ease their transitions to our beautiful and vibrant city.</p> <p>These students' success is not magic. It's actually a lot of hard work! It is highly choreographed dance between educators, administrators, and support staff at all levels putting the students first so that they have the tools and wherewithal to become future leaders of our city.</p> <p>To provide our students with the educational experience they deserve, it is essential that we prioritize investments in staffing and salary competitiveness. The budget the school board recently approved, and which is up for your consideration, does so. By adequately staffing our schools and offering competitive salaries, we can attract and retain talented educators who are dedicated to nurturing the academic growth of our students. I urge you to allocate resources towards increasing staffing levels and ensuring that our teachers and support staff receive competitive salaries. If you do so, you will not only behelping our students but you will be ensuring that our city continues to thrive.</p> <p>Our children are our future, so let's give them the best education possible. I'm giving them my best everyday. Are you? Thank you.</p> <p>Best, M. McMahon</p>

Date Received	Comment
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I would like to ask City Council to truly consider ways to fully fund the most recent budget passed by the school board. I am a life long resident of the city, and alumni of our public schools, a teacher at ACHS and a parent of a middle and high school student. I am very worried about the shortage of teachers. Both of my kids have had core classes without a teacher in the last 2 years. In my department at the high school, lack of teachers has forced classes to take in extra students (33 students in a science class) which makes labs and hands on experiences unsafe or unmanageable. Some teachers are teaching extra sections. This can lead to burnout and teachers will seek positions at other schools where they will be paid for more of their years of service. Currently, I am in my 20th year of teaching at step 16 on the scale since our pay has been frozen multiple times. I've had excellent colleagues leave because our current school system is facing challenges but often forces teachers to "just deal with it". A token of our commitment and appreciation for what our educators are doing is to pay them competitively compared to other districts and try to eliminate the "loyalty penalty" we face financially for staying with ACPS. I am committed to staying with ACHS but I am truly concerned that we risk exacerbating our teacher shortage by not addressing the issue in pay. I want the children of this city to have the best educators and I stay because I hope I am part of that for my kids and my community. I cannot say that is true for my younger colleagues who are trying to make ends meet in our costly area. I hope we can do what it takes to retain and recruit talent to our schools. Please fully fund the new ACPS budget.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear City Council,</p> <p>I have been a resident of Alexandria for four years. I am also one of the students at Alexandria City High School. And I would like to respectfully ask you to support education funding in ACPS public schools. As a member of this community and student in ACPS high school. I believe that investing in education is essential for the well-being and future success of our students and our city as a whole.</p> <p>It is significantly important that our schools can provide quality education, support our teachers and meet the diverse needs of our students. I respectfully urge you to prioritize education funding and investing in our students' education.</p> <p>Thank you for talking your time on reading this comment.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>شورای شهر محترم</p> <p>حمایت کنید. به عنوان عضوی از این جامعه و دانش آموز در دبیرستان ACPS من چهار سال است که ساکن اسکندریه هستم. من نیز یکی از دانش آموزان دبیرستان شهر اسکندریه هستم. و من با احترام از شما می خواهم که از بودجه آموزش در مدارس دولتی من معتمد که سرمایه گذاری در آموزش و پرورش برای رفاه و موفقیت آینده دانش آموزان ما و کل شهر ما ضروری است. ACPS بسیار مهم است که مدارس ما بتوانند آموزش با کیفیت ارائه دهند، از معلمان ما حمایت کنند و نیازهای متنوع دانش آموزان ما را برآورده کنند. من با احترام از شما می خواهم که بودجه آموزش و پرورش و سرمایه گذاری در آموزش دانش آموزان را در اولویت قرار دهید.</p> <p>ممنون از اینکه وقت خود را برای خواندن این مطلب صرف کردید.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I am a teacher in ACPS with 19 years experience, and a bachelor's and master's degree. I am currently being paid at step 15 due to past step freezes. Multiple coworkers have left the district for neighboring districts and had their steps restored. We are not being paid what we are worth and losing great teachers to neighboring districts. My husband and I are home owners in Alexandria and on a very tight budget to attempt to afford our tiny, two bedroom home.</p> <p>I will be going on "maternity leave" at the end of the school year and using the sick days I've been saving for eight years in order to still receive a paycheck. I am very concerned about how this will be messed up by HR (since everyone I know that has gone on "maternity leave" has had their paycheck messed up upon return).</p> <p>I appreciate your help and support in ensuring that teachers are treated fairly and valued for the professionals that we are. Our teachers and students are with it!</p>

Date Received	Comment
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Good afternoon, my name is David Paladin-Fernandez and I am here to advocate for fully funding the School Board's proposed budget.</p> <p>I say this as someone who has been an ACPS educator since 2016, a resident of Alexandria since 2017, and a property owner since 2021.</p> <p>I have several perspectives on this problem and all of them were disappointed in the joint work session last Wednesday.</p> <p>As a private citizen, I was disappointed in the dismay my city has shown towards an 8.1% increase to ACPS' budget when we spend the least percentage of our budget on public education. Only 30% compared to 41% in Arlington and around 50% in Fairfax and Falls Church.</p> <p>Moreover, as a property owner of Alexandria I am disappointed in the lack of candor surrounding raising taxes to help fund ACPS. Instead of taking on the role of leader, and saying "We must secure our future" it honestly feels like you want the school board to be the tip of the proverbial tax-increase spear.</p> <p>Hard truths need to come from our leaders, and I promise the city will respond if engaged openly and honestly about the topic.</p> <p>Finally, as an ACPS educator I was disappointed by how out of touch my council is with me.</p> <p>For example, did it not strike you as odd that a discussion about frontline educators did not actually include any frontline educators?</p> <p>Instead, you spent last week guessing what we educators go through when we could tell you first-hand about the things we experience, if only we were invited to the table.</p> <p>As such, as someone who lives, breathes, and sometimes bleeds this every day, here are a few thoughts I had from that night:</p> <p>One, if you truly understood how underpaid we educators are, you would not have conversations about "total compensation packages" nor about how beams of light coming through my window can somehow make my \$12,000 loyalty penalty disappear.</p> <p>Second, if you truly understood how many times this city has asked us educators to do more for less you would not spend time boasting about building schoolhouses. We can't and won't be able to fill them when educators realize that Alexandria won't pay them.</p> <p>Third, you most certainly are playing political games by debating whether to throw the life ring while your workers are drowning; which is exactly what happened when you spent 2 and a half hours talking about "procedure" instead of how to make my people whole.</p> <p>Finally, many of you have come, looked me in the eye, shook my hand and thanked me for my comments on Zoning for Housing.</p> <p>Well, if you thank me for helping pass that legislation, but don't enable my people to afford to live here by increasing their wages, then you have turned me from an advocate into a pawn, and I won't forget that.</p> <p>And if you take umbrage with my language, I challenge you to go to the LINK Club location at Brent Place Apartments on the West End; walk through the front door; take a left at the elevators and go into the first room on your right. Witness the conditions there first hand and then tell me if we are doing enough for our kids.</p> <p>That is why, as a private citizen, resident, and educator of Alexandria I say our schools are a community's foundation. Invest in them to make Alexandria strong. Otherwise we will leave our children to reap the consequences.</p> <p>Good day. I will see you next time.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear City Council,</p> <p>I am asking you to fully fund the School Budget proposed by the School Board. We need to pay our teachers as high as possible so we don't lose them to neighboring counties or other better paying jobs in this expensive area.</p> <p>There are many students (including my son for a while) who don't have certified teachers in their classes. One of my children decided against taking his passion- Computer Science- because there is no teacher for that class.</p> <p>Please fully fund our schools.</p> <p>Sincerely, Rebecca Anderson- mother of 3 ACPS children, and teacher</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I'm writing to express my opinion that we should fully fund a CPS schools with a focus on teacher pay and increasing the teacher.</p> <p>Thanks, Jay Zanone TCWHS Class of 1985</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I am an Alexandria resident and parents of two ACPS students. I'm writing to implore you to please fully fund the ACPS School Board's FY 2025 budget request. It includes essential funding to pay the teachers and staff who do the important work to educate and care for our kids. In our 12 years as ACPS parents, my wife and I have been so very impressed by many of the teachers and school-based administrators at Polk, Hammond, J-H, and now ACHS. But the problem is, THEY DON'T STAY! The pay scale has been underfunded for years with low COLAs and lost steps. And post-pandemic, teaching has become an even harder job with more difficult working conditions. My goal isn't to blame anyone, but to acknowledge the elephant in the room: While there were once lines of applicants waiting to fill jobs in northern Virginia schools, that's not so any more. And as neighboring districts increase their pay scale to recruit and retain teachers, ACPS needs to keep up. In the last two years, my kids have started the year twice with no teacher. This year, an Algebra vacancy wasn't filled until October, and that teacher who quit mid-year, only to be replaced by a hard-working, but uncertified teacher. A beloved advanced placement computer science teacher left mid-year, only to be replaced by a long-term sub. ACPS needs to boost its recruitment and retention by creating a pipeline for assistants and new teachers to get fully certified, then pay them enough that they will stay. I know this is a tough budget year and revenues are down, so there are difficult choices to make. But good schools benefit the whole community, not only because we'll have an educated, civic-minded, career-ready population, but also because good schools increase property values and our tax base. Schools are only as successful as the teachers and staff who work there and ACPS needs more good people working in our schools. Please raise my taxes and give student-facing staff a raise!</p>

Date Received	Comment
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I have been an Alexandria resident since 1991 and a homeowner since 1995. I was an ACPS parent and volunteer for 10 years, and I am currently a 15-year veteran ACPS elementary school teacher (being paid at step 11, my loyalty penalty is \$11,530.35 this year). I am writing to ask the City Council to fully fund the School Board's budget request. This money is necessary to make sure that ACPS can maintain and recruit quality educators during a nationwide teacher shortage and increasingly difficult working conditions.</p> <p>As a frontline educator, it is disheartening to be caught in the crossfire of political disputes between the school board and city council. While the school board's efforts to address the concerns of educators are commendable, it is frustrating to feel like a pawn in the political games played by leaders. The influx of refugees and other newcomers, among other issues, necessitates a greater investment from the city to support our students and educators adequately. It is essential for the city to recognize the importance of providing resources to ensure that our neighbors and those working on their behalf receive the support they need to thrive in our community.</p> <p>The lip service given to the idea of educational equity without the means to enact meaningful change contradicts the notion of progressiveness that the city aspires to embody. My Title 1 school's population has doubled since 2009 and continues to grow every day with children who require more expertise and experience to learn. The fifteen years of training and institutional knowledge I have should be invaluable to ACPS.</p> <p>It is crucial for city leaders to prioritize education and allocate the necessary resources to support the diverse and challenging needs of our student population. By investing in our schools and educators, the city can demonstrate a genuine commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment for all residents, including the growing English Learner community. It is imperative for city leaders to consider the long-term impact of their decisions on the education system and work collaboratively with the school board to prioritize the well-being of students and educators alike.</p> <p>On a personal level, I cannot adequately express just how insulting it is to continue to hear the comments from our leaders about educators working in education for reasons other than the pay. I can assure you that the sunshine coming in through the very drafty and inefficient windows in my classroom does not pay my bills. Loyal ACPS employees deserve to be rewarded for sticking with the district during times when we were asked to do so, and we deserve to be spoken to and about like the professionals we are.</p> <p>Frontline educators should not bear the brunt of political disagreements between the school board and city council. The city must step up its efforts to invest in education and support the growing ELL population to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to succeed. By working together to prioritize education and provide adequate resources, we can create a more equitable and progressive community for everyone.</p> <p>Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts.</p> <p>Best,</p> <p>Susan C. Lathrop</p> <p>12 East Maple Street</p> <p>Alexandria, VA 22301</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear City Council,</p> <p>I am a parent of an ACHS senior and sophomore. We own a home on the West End. I am an educator in Fairfax and my husband is an educator in Arlington. I can validate that the national teacher shortage is real and the morale of teachers is at an all time low. Working conditions become more and more difficult as families struggle and expectations on educators and schools grow. The work we do is nothing short of miraculous and no where is the more true than ACPS. The diversity of our city is what makes it special, but meeting the needs requires additional resources. We cannot just match local jurisdictions - we need to more especially when it comes to teacher hiring and retention. Classroom teachers, and really, any educator will be able to work wherever they want and some may choose to leave Alexandria for a higher salary and lower needs population. Teachers who have stayed through the past several years at the same salary despite inflation deserve to have raises through step increase - reward for loyalty to our kids and schools in tough times. Every year teachers leave ACPS to take jobs closer to their homes because they can't afford to live in our city. Need to attract new teachers for growing student population and to stay competitive with other areas as the teacher pipeline is smaller than ever & NOVA is a competitive hiring area for high-quality educators (see graph below). As 80% of the ACPS operating budget goes toward staff benefits and salaries⁴, full funding enables ACPS to offer a strong benefit package to recruit excellent educators. I realize this will require a tax hike. That is fine with me because I know that a strong school systems strengthens communities. ACHS staff will be leading the way with the high school project. The reality of this ambitious program is that everyone will work harder and longer hours. We need to make sure they are compensated and dont quit.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I'm a 22 year resident of Alexandria and since 2022 have owned a small business here. I'm writing about the pressing need to fully fund our public schools.</p> <p>I have witnessed firsthand the invaluable impact that dedicated teachers have on the lives of our children, including my own daughter who attended ACPS schools from 2005-2015. However, it is becoming increasingly challenging to attract and retain qualified educators, such as my wife, an ACPS veteran of 15 years. I watched the dedication, love and work she poured into getting certified to teach as her second career, the work she puts in daily with her students, and I've put my own sweat and tears into her classroom and her school. I've watched as many of her respected colleagues have left ACPS for neighboring districts for higher salaries and better working conditions.</p> <p>It is crucial that we prioritize investment in education to provide our schools with the resources necessary to support and retain high-quality educators. Buy fully funding the proposed budget for our school district, we can demonstrate our commitment to valuing and supporting our teachers, thereby fostering a stable and thriving educational environment for our students.</p> <p>Please vote to invest in our children's education.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear Mr Parajon, Mayor Wilson and city council members. Thank you for your dedication to our city. I have lived in Alexandria for a total of 20 years, 15 of those children and 10 with kids in the public schools. We lived briefly in Bethesda before children and returned here for the young, diverse and kind community that we have always found in Alexandria. We endure commutes to live here. However, we are growing increasingly concerned about the state of the public schools. The diverse and enriching community comes with challenges that are probably felt more acutely in the schools than anywhere else. With higher percentages of FARM and ESL students than other local districts, we have to accept as a community that we are going to need more tax money to properly educate these students and all the rest. My 9th grader has not had a full slate of qualified teachers since October. That's 5 months of her suffering with teacher vacancies (due to the departure of a Spanish teacher then a long term medical leave for a math teacher). And I know she's not the only one. I don't believe that more money is the only solution, but we owe it to these kids to do all that we can to retain the best teachers. I believe investing in restoring their steps is a necessity. I support a tax increase to achieve this goal. Thank you. Karis Cavender</p>

Date Received	Comment
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>Dear Alexandria City Council,</p> <p>I am writing to address several concerns regarding the current state of the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) and its impact on its employees. Specifically, I would like to discuss the school board's budget, the issue of missed steps for teachers, and the disconnect between the City Council and ACPS employees.</p> <p>Firstly, I urge you to consider approving the school board's budget. Adequate funding is crucial for providing a quality education to our students and ensuring that our teachers have the necessary resources to excel in their roles.</p> <p>Additionally, the issue of missed steps for teachers is of great concern. By remaining in ACPS, many of us are paying a loyalty penalty as we do not receive the step increases we deserve. This not only affects our morale but also impacts our financial stability, especially when coupled with the rising costs of healthcare and living expenses.</p> <p>Moreover, it is disheartening to see the working conditions and class sizes exceeding the recommended cap. Our school building is over capacity, which raises serious safety concerns in the event of an emergency. Furthermore, the lack of appropriate classrooms for core content and electives subjects hinders our ability to provide a comprehensive education to our students. We have SEVERAL teachers on a cart using another teachers classroom when they are on planning.</p> <p>I understand that these issues may not be fully apparent to those outside of our school community. I welcome anyone of you to come and shadow me at my school so you can observe what I am referring to in this letter. However, it is crucial to recognize the challenges we face on a daily basis and the impact they have on our ability to deliver quality education.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to these matters. I trust that you will take our concerns into consideration and work towards addressing them sooner than later.</p> <p>Sincerely, Dr. Laura Moore</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>I am writing today to urge you to fully fund the budget approved by the ACPS School Board. ACPS is in a dire situation: our schools have been underfunded for years. Teacher pay is the number one reason that teachers are leaving our schools, which they are doing at an unprecedented rate. Cutting the school board's proposed budget will mean not giving teachers the salary increases necessary to keep ACPS competitive. Before cutting our school board's budget - which, even if fully funded will still leave our school system underfunded -- the city should take a hard look at its overall budget to see where else it might be able to cut instead. Our schools are the building blocks of our community, and our children are the most valuable resource we have. The City should be investing in them to its maximum capacity, not cutting the reasonable budget put forward by the School Board to provide the funds needed to keep our schools strong. Our teachers deserve better, our kids deserve better, our city can and must do better.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Sunday, March 10, 2024	<p>As a parent of two ACPS students I am deeply concerned about the issues around teacher retention in our district. I strongly support the budget approved by the school board especially restoring steps for teachers. I ask the city council to approve the requested budget.</p>
Saturday, March 9, 2024	<p>I strongly support the city fully funding the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) approved budget. As a parent of two ACPS students and a resident of the city for almost a decade, I believe that investing in education is essential for the well-being and future success of our city's children.</p> <p>Our students need teachers and support staff who can address their mental health needs. We are still seeing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our kids, and our children need to be able to access important mental health resources to help pave their way to academic success, including psychologists and counselors who can spend individual time with students to work through challenges. According to The Shape of Youth Mental Health in Virginia's recent "Beyond The Trauma" report, 47 percent of students who attend public middle or high school in the state reported having a mental health need in the current or past-year (https://www.cfnova.org/images/pdf/Beyond_The_Trauma_report_final.pdf). Additions to the budget such as the 1.0 FTE, Psychologist, to Alexandria City High School have the potential to help students in crisis.</p> <p>In fact, every teacher and staff position outlined in the final ACPS budget is crucial not only for providing essential support to our diverse student population but also for advancing equity in our schools. By ensuring adequate staffing levels, we can begin to address the unique needs of all students in every part of the city, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances. This investment is vital as we strive to create an inclusive learning environment where every child has the opportunity to thrive.</p> <p>We also need to pay those teachers and staff a competitive salary so that they can afford to stay in our schools. Every year teachers leave ACPS to take jobs elsewhere because they either can't afford to live or to work as a teacher in our city. It's heartbreaking for parents and students when their favorite teachers leave, and it's disruptive to learning as we wait for vacancies to be filled, which has become much harder with the teacher pipeline being smaller than ever and nearby locales offering attractive benefit packages to recruit educators. I have seen this happen to too many of my fellow families, particularly on the West End of Alexandria, in the past four years.</p> <p>While I understand the challenges posed by this budget year, delaying investment in our children, teachers, and schools would only perpetuate inequities and hinder our progress toward achieving educational equity. We simply cannot afford to shortchange their future.</p> <p>I urge you to prioritize funding for these critical positions in the ACPS budget so we can take meaningful steps towards closing the achievement gap and ensuring that every student receives a high-quality education that prepares them for future success.</p>
Saturday, March 9, 2024	<p>I'm a ten year Rosemont resident and parent of two students in first and forth grade at Naomi L. Brooks Elementary. I'm asking the city manager and city council to fully fund Alexandria City Public Schools' budget, to include the "adds" to the budget from the school board to the superintendent's budget. I support these additions to the budget, even if it means a tax increase. I urge you to examine the budget and see if there are areas we can fund this money to fund our schools. Education is a public good and the cornerstone of our community. With an upcoming mayoral election and city council election, funding Alexandria's public schools is my #1 priority issue.</p>
Saturday, March 9, 2024	<p>Dear Alexandria City Council and Staff,</p> <p>Thank you for all that you do to make Alexandria City an amazing place to live. We treasure this community—its diversity, rich history, and culture make it a unique place to live. However, our public school are in crisis. It may be tempting to dismiss this by saying that ALL schools are facing a crisis right now. That is true, but Alexandria City's student population has greater needs (and I believe greater potential) than neighboring school systems. We have more English Language Learners and more Free and Reduced Lunch students than our neighbors. We HAVE to spend more than our neighbors to meet the needs of these populations. We must work to retain our teachers by paying them competitive wages and avoid loyalty penalties by restoring steps. This is what the School Board's proposed budget does. If you ask me, it does not go far enough, because it still does not fund all necessary school psychologists or Advanced Academic Services (formerly TAG) teachers that ACPS believes it needs.</p> <p>The Superintendent's budget was made in coordination with the City Manager and aimed to fit into pre-existing budget constraints. We cannot sit idly by while the needs of our children go unmet. I ask you to fully fund the School Board's budget and work hard to figure out how to make that work.</p> <p>Sincerely, Evan Wilson Father to two ACPS students</p>
Saturday, March 9, 2024	<p>Fully fund our schools before funding the development of more housing in the city. Our schools are overcrowded and not able to provide the quality education and safe environment that children and families who live here and pay taxes now deserve. My child's class had 28 students in it and a long term sub for a teacher. This is unsatisfactory and should not be happening. He was also assaulted by a fellow 4th grade student in the hallway due to the lack of strong policies, lack of training for teachers, lack of security in schools, and the lack of ability to enforce punishments against violence in ACPS. If additional funds are needed to hire good teachers and pay for resources to create safe schools then funding additional housing and development should be cut to pay for it.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Saturday, March 9, 2024	<p>Mayor Wilson, Vice-Mayor Jackson and Members of the City Council,</p> <p>I write in support of full funding for the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) FY 2025 Approved Combined Funds Budget.</p> <p>As you well know, ACPS has one of the highest teacher vacancy rates in Northern Virginia, doubling in just one year from 2.8% in 2022-2023 to 6.6% in 2023-2024. That isn't just random data point; that's a real number affecting real professionals and real students every day. It took three months before my own 11th grader had an actual teacher in his Probability & Statistics class and, not surprisingly, when a wonderful and enthusiastic teacher finally joined them, math suddenly became his favorite subject.</p> <p>A successful school system aligns its policies and programs to maximize student achievement, and nothing matters more to that success than hiring and retaining the highest quality educators. Without the 2% market rate adjustment and a return of the lost 2021 step increase for all eligible staff, I fear even more teachers will leave ACPS for neighboring districts.</p> <p>I also urge you to include these critical School Board-approved additions to the ACPS budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •2.0 FTE Middle School Deans (one at GWMS and one at Hammond) •1.0 FTE Athletic Trainer at ACHS •1.0 FTE School Psychologist at ACHS •0.6 FTE Dari/Pashto Interpreter •2.0 FTE Elementary AAS Teachers •1.0 FTE College and Career Center Position at ACHS <p>I understand that City Council is facing a difficult budget year with decreased revenue projections and numerous high-priority funding demands. However, I am confident that you all share my goal of helping ACPS students realize their full potential and bringing families, educators, and community members together.</p> <p>Please show your full support for Alexandria City Public Schools by fully funding the ACPS FY 2025 Approved Combined Funds Budget.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Missy Estabrook Alexandria PTAC Past President 2023-2024 President.Past@alexvaptac.org http://alexvaptac.org</p>
Friday, March 8, 2024	<p>I am writing in support of the School Board's proposed budget. I believe the schools need these budget increases and I hope the Council does too.</p> <p>It may mean some hard choices in other areas but our students and teachers are worth it. We need to be able to retain our teachers and re-attract those who have left the school system. Our students deserve modern, renovated schools and the best teachers so they can continue to get high quality education.</p> <p>I call on City Council Members to fully fund the schools as the School Board has requested.</p>
Thursday, March 7, 2024	<p>Please prioritize the working class families in our city in creating our city budget by expanding the guaranteed income program and the expansion of affordable housing for those making 40% AMI or below. Moreover, our fire fighters and other public safety officials along with teachers and staff need access to housing in our city and a variety of other supports that the budget should address so that we can attract and retain their talent.</p>
Thursday, March 7, 2024	<p>As a resident of Alexandria for 20 years and an ACPS parent, I ask you to approve the school board's budget including returning \$20M to the CIP budget for the George Mason project or make appropriate efforts to keep the George Mason project on or near schedule. Public education is the cornerstone of our society and we need to support our students and teachers in the best way possible. Investment in our schools will help our society thrive.</p>
Thursday, March 7, 2024	<p>Please fully fund ACPS! Anything less than the proposed budget is unacceptable. We need to show the amazing teachers at ACPS that we value them and their important work for our community. As a resident and tax payer, this is by far my number one budget priority for the city. Please do the right thing and give our schools the resources they need.</p>
Thursday, March 7, 2024	<p>I ask that the Council please support a low-income rent-voucher program, an expansion of the ARISE guaranteed-income pilot, and for continued support of working-class (40% of area median income) affordable housing. Thank you.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Thursday, March 7, 2024	<p>Mayor Wilson, Members of the Alexandria City Council, and Mr. Parajon,</p> <p>I am writing to you in three capacities--Alexandria resident since 2008, parent of two children in Alexandria City Public Schools, and current Chair of the School Board's Budget Advisory Committee (BAC)--to request that the City fully fund the School Board's approved Operating and CIP budgets.</p> <p>As you all know, our schools are the heartbeat of our community. When they thrive, the community thrives. The City is the largest single source of funding for ACPS and teacher compensation makes up the vast majority of that budget. This makes sense given that teachers are the single most meaningful contributor to students' learning and growth. Without high-quality teachers, our system will suffer, our students will suffer, and our community will suffer.</p> <p>Nationally, teacher vacancy rates are on the rise, and that is no different in the Washington, DC metro region. We must make a sound commitment to recruit and retain high-quality teachers, so that Alexandria can be the best school division in the region.</p> <p>This Council and previous Councils should be commended for their efforts to ensure that our teacher compensation remains highly competitive. But it is not enough to rest on our laurels. As we look around at other jurisdictions, we see that many are proposing additional investments in FY2025 to improve teacher compensation through additional step increases, market rate adjustments, and in many cases, both. If we don't continue to invest, we risk losing more educators to our neighbors. We need to be proactive, not reactive.</p> <p>I understand that to meet, or even come close, to the School Board's approved budgets will require either cuts to services in the City or increasing residential property taxes. Neither action should be taken lightly.</p> <p>And yet, our investments reflect our values. I value high expectations and healthy, welcoming environments for our students, knowing that education is the most important factor in helping individuals find economic opportunity and mobility. As a property owner, I am asking you to consider a moderate tax increase to be able to invest in the future of our youth and the future of our City.</p> <p>Further, in my role as Chair, I join my BAC colleagues in requesting that the City maintain the Division's previous CIP plan for George Mason and Cora Kelly. We believe that to meet the City's Green Building Policy and prepare for the Sane and Naja affordable housing development in Arlandria, it is important that the City provides the investment necessary to deliver on the projects as planned. School modernization is critical to both meet the needs of the Division's growth, and provide environments that are more conducive to learning.</p> <p>BAC does not traditionally advocate for specific budget requests; rather, we generally provide advice to the School Board about improvements to the budget process and communication with the public. This time is different. As a body, we believe that it is critical to make the community aware of the opportunities and challenges confronting the Division, and ensure that we are prioritizing actions that improve the wellbeing of our community. We stand with other community members in asking the Council to approve this additional request so that we can keep our schools and our community thriving.</p> <p>Thank you for your service, Ryan Reyna ACPS Parent Chair, Alexandria City School Board' Budget Advisory Committee</p>
Thursday, March 7, 2024	<p>I understand the budget proposal recommends cutting Line 104 DASH bus service. I am writing in opposition to this. As a regular Line 104 rider this seems to fly in the face of everything the city says it wants to do, specifically get more cars off the road and more people to take mass transit. We specifically moved to where we live to be on the bus line for commuting and getting to the airport and Del Ray. Taking the bus from 30 minutes (already decreased from the pre-Covid 20 minute interval) to an hour will result in less usage and more people driving during rush hour. This seems counterproductive and short sighted. When the city says it want public transportation and non-car transportation for all parts of the city this must not be true if you are willing to cut the only already limited service the Line 104 neighborhood gets. You also tout connecting to metro way and the old town circulator to residents but that will no longer be an option. Again, this seems very short-sighted.</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Hello, I'd ask that you implement a few items. Please allocate \$10 million for the creation and implementation of a locally funded voucher program to support families who earn 40% of the area median income (AMI) and below Very importantly, please expand and invest \$10 million to expand the guaranteed income pilot program (ARISE). This is a great program that the Mayor has championed. Also, please consider continuing to fund the approved pipeline projects that will provide units at 40% AMI and below.</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Dear Mayor Wilson, City Council Members, and City Manager Parajon, I am writing to express my strong support for fully funding our public schools and approving the school board's proposed budget request. As an Alexandria resident and a parent of two children in ACPS, I believe that investing in education is essential for the well-being and future success of our children and our city as a whole.</p> <p>It is crucial that our schools have the resources they need to provide quality education, support our teachers, and meet the diverse needs of our students. By fully funding the proposed ACPS budget, we can ensure that our children receive the education they deserve and that our community continues to thrive. Without fully funding the School Board's budget request, our teachers will fall behind our surrounding school districts and we risk more teacher and staff vacancies.</p> <p>I urge you to prioritize education funding. Investing in our children's education is an investment in the future prosperity of our city. Julia Sylla</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Hello! My name is Emma Reese, and I am a member of the Miracle League Board. In a few days, the Head of our Board, Mac Slover, will be sending a letter to the Council asking for \$280,000 to be included in the 2025 budget to resurface the Miracle Field. For those of you who don't know, the Miracle League is an organization dedicated to allowing players with disabilities to play baseball. The Miracle Field is one of the main tools that we use to make that possible; the surface material of the field allows it to be utilized by wheelchairs or walkers. The turf provides a safe landing spot to fall when our players are unsteady on our feet. Most of all, the Miracle Field provides a place where players of all abilities feel welcome, and have the chance to feel accomplished, confident, and proud. The Miracle Field is now over ten years old, which means that the surface of the field is beginning to break down. I ask that the Council please consider adding the Miracle Field to the budget. Thank you so much, Emma Reese</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Por FAVOR POR NUESTRA COMUNIDAD AYUDENLOS A MANTENERLOS EN EL MISMO LUGAR SIN TENER QUE PAGAR UN ALTO COSTO DE RENTA!! NUESTROS HIJOS AN CRECIDO EN UN LUGAR DONDE NO QUIEREN QUE NOS MUDEMOS, DONDE SU INFANCIA LES GUSTA PORQUE TIENEN TODO CERCA..</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>I am writing today to ask you to fully fund the ACPS Budget that includes the School Board's additions to the Superintendent's Budget. I have three children in ACPS (grades 10, 6, and kindergarten) and if we don't have teachers then we all fail. I am terrified of losing even more teachers, support staff, and principals to neighboring districts. All three of my children's schools started this year with a brand new principal. And sadly I feel lucky that for the most part all three have teachers for all of their classes (for the most part because when a teacher is out on extended medical leave, there is sometimes not even a sub to fill in). I can barely afford to live in this City but I support a tax increase to pay our teachers/school staff the salaries they deserve. I believe the Superintendent and City Council can find ways to cut costs elsewhere if a tax increase is not feasible. Please fully fund our schools as requested by our School Board!!</p> <p>Thanks, Kristin</p>

Date Received	Comment
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Dear Members of the City Council,</p> <p>I'm here to express my strong support for fully funding our public schools and approving the superintendent's proposed budget. As a member of this community and a parent of an elementary school student who attends George Mason, I believe that investing in education is essential for the well-being and future success of our children and our city as a whole.</p> <p>It is crucial that our schools have the resources they need to provide quality education, support our teachers, and meet the diverse needs of our students. By fully funding the proposed ACPS budget, we can ensure that our children receive the education they deserve and that our community continues to thrive.</p> <p>My son has had wonderful teachers during his elementary school experience. I want to ensure his teachers and all the caring educators in the Alexandria public school system are valued to the extent that they continue to grow their career here in our hometown.</p> <p>I am very concerned about teacher shortages, inadequate salaries, overcrowding in classrooms, and the negative ripple effects of these circumstances that are felt throughout our community.</p> <p>I am very concerned that our local government is not recognizing the urgency of the problems our school system is going through, and the vital importance of fully funding the recommended budget.</p> <p>Based on the resources in our community and the compassionate, progressive focus of our city, we should have the best school system in the area. That is not our current status and it won't happen if we don't invest more financially. This is a critical time.</p> <p>I urge you to prioritize education funding. Investing in our children's education is an investment in the future prosperity of our city.</p> <p>Thank you for considering my views on this important matter.</p> <p>Best,</p> <p>Michaela Muttom North Ridge neighborhood resident</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Dear Members of the City Council,</p> <p>I am an ACPS parent and a resident of Alexandria City for the last 24 years who cares deeply about the pressing need for increased staffing and competitive salaries within our public schools to ensure that our students receive the highest quality education in the region.</p> <p>I'm among many in the community who are invested in the success and well-being of our students. However, it has become increasingly evident that our schools are facing challenges in attracting and retaining qualified staff due to inadequate compensation and staffing levels.</p> <p>In addition to being an ACPS parent, I am also a high school ESOL teacher in FCPS, so I know firsthand what it takes to be an effective teacher in today's world. I am incredibly grateful to the numerous ACPS teachers who have provided my children with an excellent education, and if it takes raising taxes to compensate them fairly, I'm all for it. I don't want ACPS to lose more teachers, and I believe we are heading into a crisis situation.</p> <p>I also would like to request an outside audit of ACPS central office to be sure that funds are being utilized properly and efficiently. If there is waste, we need to address that.</p> <p>To provide our students with the educational experience they deserve, it is essential that we prioritize investments in staffing and salary competitiveness. The budget the school board recently approved, and which is up for your consideration, does so. By adequately staffing our schools and offering competitive salaries, we can attract and retain talented educators who are dedicated to nurturing the academic growth of our students.</p> <p>I urge you to allocate resources towards increasing staffing levels and ensuring that our teachers and support staff receive competitive salaries. If you do so, you will not only be helping our students, but you will be ensuring that our city continues to thrive. Our children are our future, so let's give them the best education possible. This should be the city's top priority.</p> <p>Thank you. Patrice Gotsch</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Hello City Council,</p> <p>I am writing as a concerned parent, requesting that you fully fund ACPS per the additional budget requests added by the School Board. I have two children in ACPS, one in 4th grade so I've seen a LOT of transitions. I have seen firsthand the teacher turnover in my son's school. Teachers are working exceptionally hard already and the thought of losing more to burnout and/or frustration is disheartening.</p> <p>The Alexandria PTAC has organized excellent information highlighting how ACPS students have more complex needs due to immigration and Free Lunch demographics. My sons' school is one of the Free Lunch sites; dedicated teachers are engaging families, running additional programs on shoestring budgets, and wearing multiple hats as they navigate serving high-need families. Additionally, fully-funding ACPS will increase school capacity. As the city council increases affordable housing, families come with it and there is a need for school capacity.</p> <p>Thank you for hearing my concerns as a parent in the community. We want our public school to succeed - we have seen many families in our community choose to move out of Alexandria and the schools are cited as a reason. Please help make ACPS an attractive school program. I see parent boosters working SO hard to promote programs and wish we could see that enthusiasm at the City Council level, too.</p> <p>Katie Niersbach</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Please fully fund the budget as requested by the School Board (not the Superintendent). This extra funding is crucial for increased teacher pay and for key construction projects like the George Mason Elementary School project. We have been underfunding our schools for years. It is time to give ACPS what it needs to succeed.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>What does it take for a teacher to feel cared for and supported by their district? I feel supported by my Principal through her words and deeds, by the parents of the students I teach through their cards and kind remarks, by my colleagues at my school by the times they step in to help, and by my students who work hard every day, but what would it be like to feel supported by my district and my city?</p> <p>I did not grow up in Alexandria, but I married into a family that has close ties to the city. In fact, my daughters go to the same elementary school that their grandmother went to, and I think that is really special. People in Alexandria have connections, and teachers in Alexandria have connections. We want to work here, we want to see the kids here learn and thrive. I think the opportunities in this city are far beyond what we've even begun to see from our kids and it takes dedicated, veteran teachers, to make that happen. However, I can not continue to work in a district that doesn't see the potential in me, the way I see the potential in it.</p> <p>I started working in ACPS when I was newly pregnant with my second child because I looked to a future of having the same Winter, Spring, and Summer breaks, I wanted to know a lot about the schools my kids would attend, and I wanted to be a part of the community on multiple levels.</p> <p>At the time I left DCPS, I would have had 3 months of fully paid maternity leave, as I did with my first child. Unfortunately, ACPS does not have such parental leave and I was left only with my 1 year's worth of sick & personal leave and whatever donations I could collect from my new colleagues. It was really hard to make it work, but we did it because we continued to look to the future. Had I been paying attention, it was the first indication that my district and my city don't care about me, as a mother.</p> <p>The next time I knew the district didn't care about teachers was when, amid a pandemic, they froze our pay in the form of not giving us a step increase. Now I know budgets were tight at the time, however as the economy recovered and we started getting end-of-year bonuses, I thought that instead of those, they might think of restoring our steps to be on par with those newly-hired employees as a better, more lasting incentive for folks to stay. But all we get is talk from the Chief Financial Officer about open markets and moving to another district for higher pay (what kind of retention strategy is that by the way?) in a job where we have zero negotiating power when it comes to our salary.</p> <p>So here we are at another crossroads where the district and city can show that they care about teachers and the students of this city. The school board has approved an increase in pay and additional employees in several key roles to help support teachers and all the work that they do. The school board and the city have to start working together. The finger-pointing and the blame only serve to protect the status quo and do nothing to make those of us doing the hard work every day of teaching children, feel supported. As a resident of the city, I am willing to fund my own pay increase through an increase in taxes and I think it comes down to who the City Council is here to serve. Are you here to serve our public school students, with over 50% of whom qualify for free and reduced lunch? Or are you here to protect the homeowners of \$1mil+ homes?</p> <p>I challenge each one of you to go sub in a school for a week and tell me that teachers don't deserve all of this and more. Tell me that we don't need more personnel, that we don't need more support, that we don't need additional funding to make our schools wonderful places for students to learn and grow. Yes, our school-aged population might be small, but it is the future of our city, and if we don't start investing in it now, we are going to have to pay for it later.</p> <p>Please fully fund ACPS and fully fund our future.</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Subject: Urgent Call for Action: Addressing the Affordable Housing Crisis in Alexandria</p> <p>Dear City Staff and City Council Members,</p> <p>As you work diligently on the development of the Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget and the Fiscal Year 2025–2034 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), I urge you to prioritize addressing the critical affordable housing crisis that our community is facing. The lack of affordable housing not only threatens the well-being of individuals and families but also undermines the fundamental principle of human dignity.</p> <p>Every citizen, regardless of socioeconomic status, deserves access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. Housing is not merely a commodity; it is a basic human need and a fundamental right. It is essential for individuals to be able to work, live, worship, and build a life within our community. Our city must not be seen as an exclusive club for the elite but rather as a place where all residents are valued and welcomed.</p> <p>As a citizen of Alexandria and a descendant of the Parker, Dogan, and Bentley families, whose ancestors were enslaved and freedmen contributing to this community since the late 1700s, I am deeply committed to advocating for equitable access to housing for all. The legacy of my ancestors, who endured unimaginable hardships, inspires me to stand up for justice and equality in our city.</p> <p>I urge you to prioritize funding and resources towards affordable housing initiatives in the upcoming budget and capital improvement program. This includes investing in the preservation and development of affordable housing units, expanding rental assistance programs, and implementing policies to prevent displacement and gentrification in our neighborhoods.</p> <p>By taking bold and decisive action to address the affordable housing crisis, we can uphold the dignity of every individual in our community and ensure that Alexandria remains a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. I stand ready to support your efforts and collaborate towards creating a more just and equitable city for all.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Christian Bentley</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Please make fully-funding the ACPS budget a priority. Teachers are truly front line workers for our city and they are terribly overworked and underfunded right now. The superintendent's budget does not adequately recognize the acute needs of our schools. I am hopeful that City Council will better see the importance of prioritizing schools. ACPS students have more complex needs than neighboring jurisdictions, yet our per pupil spending is lower or only slightly higher than neighboring jurisdictions. 36.2% of ACPS students are English Language Learners (ELL) and 54.4% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch.* My son has benefitted greatly from the diversity of his fellow ACPS students, but there is a cost to serving a truly diverse constituency. I recognize the difficult position that Council finds itself in with an eroding real estate tax base, but please recognize that schools are in crisis now, and that making educational services a priority will reduce costs in other areas. Education is truly an investment in the city, and one that is desperately needed right now.</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>I write to urge the City Council to consider some of the additions in the School Board approved budget. For too long the City has pushed aside the concerns of the school population over bigger projects that might have a long term benefit, but have resulted in immediate concerns. I have lived in Alexandria since 1998 and not once - ever - have people bragged about the school system. We have always been the city that sends its students to private schools and those who do use the public school system are bad parents or are poor. Now I live in the West End and send my daughter to William Ramsay and each day see the impact of the neglect of the West End has on the students. For example, as proposed by the city, all of the schools on the West End will loose an AAS teacher while the richer, whiter schools will maintain two teacher for advanced academic students. The school board included keeping two teacher for all elementary schools. How can the City Council preach equity when removing support for thriving students who may not be rich or white? And I write that as a comfortably upper middle class white woman who has seen first hand how the families of her child's classmates are dismissed. Our teachers deserve more money. Our students deserved well paid, well respected teachers. Our city deserves a city council that supports this even if it means a slight increase in overall taxes.</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Many of the Old Town roads need to be re-paved, especially S. Washington Street and King street.</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>Please help fund our schools appropriately. I have dedicated all 15 years of my career to public education and it is failing! It's failing its employees and more importantly, it's failing our children. I have never been a proponent for private school, but if I had the money, both of my children would be taken out of ACPS and placed in a private school that has small class sizes, evidence and research based curriculums in place, low teacher turnover, and updated facilities.</p>
Wednesday, March 6, 2024	<p>As you develop the budget for FY2025, it is imperative to include a focus on affordable housing and other measures that assist our lower income neighbors to remain part of the vital fabric of our city. If we become a city of wealthy white people, we will lose the character that makes Alexandria unique and vibrant. Please to everything in your power through the budget to prevent this outcome. Thank you.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Tuesday, March 5, 2024	<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>I'm writing to urge the council to fully fund ACPS. Having been on the receiving end of not getting a cost of living increase myself, I know first hand how hard that can be living in this area. Everything around me has increased, my taxes, my food, insurance, medications, everything I need to live a healthy life. Yet, my wages have been considered not worthy of increase despite all of these things. No one should have to experience that.</p> <p>If the City Council's priorities are to focus on Community Connections, Employee Attraction & Retention, Eliminating Community Disparities and Economic Strength, fully funding the schools are a key part of all of those. Schools are a key tool for building communities and eliminating disparities with quality teachers who are invested.</p> <p>The idea that teachers don't care enough if the money isn't adequate isn't a realistic reason in the current times we are living. Many people are living in student debt, medical debt, credit card debt. Even our school system has student lunch debt, words that shouldn't even exist in general much less in a city as expensive as ours. How does this city think we are going to grow economically if our students aren't being given all the tools we need?</p> <p>Thank you,</p>
Tuesday, March 5, 2024	<p>Please fully fund the ACPS budget approved by the School Board, which provides a competitive salary package for our teachers. If City Council adopts the ACPS budget proposed by the City Manager, Alexandria will be the only NOVA jurisdiction not offering an additional market rate adjustment for the FY25 school year. We have an extremely competitive marketplace teachers and given our complex student demographics, we must offer top-tier salaries and benefits to attract high quality educators. I support an increase in my property tax rate to make this happen.</p> <p>Thank you very much, Maureen McNulty</p>
Tuesday, March 5, 2024	<p>I'm concerned about the disruption and displacement that will be imminent in my community and for my neighbors if the City does not take action. I urge the City to prioritize working class families and invest in anti-displacement measures in the 2025 budget by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) allocating \$10 million for the creation and implementation of a locally funded voucher program to support families who earn 40% of the area median income (AMI) and below; 2) investing \$10 million to expand the guaranteed income pilot program (ARISE) continuing to fund the approved pipeline projects that will provide units at 40% AMI and below. <p>Much of the federal funding that once supported the most impacted city residents is about to end. I urge the City to act to preserve my community and protect our most vulnerable families.</p>
Monday, March 4, 2024	<p>I am writing over concerns that there is 0 budget for tree planting and maintenance. In addition, it appears funding has been removed for hourly park clean up work. The parks on the WestEnd (Booth and Brenman) get a lot of use and unfortunately, park users choose not to use the trash cans and throw trash everywhere. There is a rat problem at Boothe currently (right where the children play, in fact). Please tell me how this will be addressed.</p>
Monday, March 4, 2024	<p>I am a longtime City resident and Tree Steward volunteer.</p> <p>Asking that funding for City tree planting, invasive plant removal and related activities be adequately and transparently funded. And that vacant land resources staff positions be filled expeditiously. This is critically important in service of City quality of life and climate change mitigation goals. Thank you.</p>
Monday, March 4, 2024	<p>There should be a budget for employee wellbeing. Employee morale is not at its highest and there are things that can be done to ensure that employees feel appreciated as the true public servant that we are. For example, have a budget to do employee events during the work day.</p> <p>Have employees meet the mayor, some of us do live here and have never spoke or met the mayor.</p> <p>Alexandria is not what it used to, crimes and the rent is high. Which indirectly means that parents are working two jobs and kids are raising themselves and with no supervision, they're doing anything and everything to get money. If you can control the rent that would be great because working a full time job, it is hard to make the rent.</p>
Saturday, March 2, 2024	<p>Please do not reduce the DASH bus services on line 104. Many people in my neighborhood, including my family, rely on it to get to work, the metro and school. Please keep it running twice per hour during peak times.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Saturday, March 2, 2024	<p>Cutting service to DASH104 is unacceptable. As it is the bus, which is heavily used by commuters & students in the neighborhood, was already reduced during covid to only twice an hour. Reducing services even more would render this service all but useless. Imagine scheduling your commute with a bus that services your community once an hour. Miss it & your whole day is an hour behind. Alexandria wishes to create a eco-friendly city and reducing bus services is not in line with that vision. It might behoove the city to look into making the 104 the school bus for GW students along this route in this time of limited school bus drivers.</p>
Friday, March 1, 2024	<p>I am writing because I see that the 2025 budget proposal would reduce service on DASH line 104 to once per hour during weekday peaks. The City Manager's Message suggests that this service reduction would save \$180,000, less than .02% of a proposed budget of more than \$911 million. Please reconsider this decision.</p> <p>I currently ride DASH line 104 to work and home from work three days per week. In addition, my children ride DASH line 104 to George Washington Middle School and home on each school day.</p> <p>For school commuters: Dozens of children from our neighborhood ride DASH line 104 to and from school at GWMS every day due to its reliability. This has led ACPS to reduce bus service to our neighborhood and allocate its bus resources elsewhere. Reducing service on the DASH line is likely to increase transportation costs for ACPS, further reducing school bus reliability in our neighborhood. In addition, the availability of the DASH line helps my children participate in after school activities that do not always finish in time for the late school bus. This change undermines the message, which we've tried to instill in our kids, that public transportation is for everyone.</p> <p>For Metro commuters: This line was already reduced from 3x per hour to 2x per hour during the recent reorganization. This meant that the longest potential wait times from Metro connections at Pentagon and Braddock Road increased from 20 to 30 minutes, which was largely a manageable change. Reducing the DASH schedule to once per hour increases potential wait times to 60 minutes. This is likely to drive riders away from the line. It makes more sense to eliminate Line 104 altogether than to institute a service change that will make it very hard for riders to rely on it as a connection from their Metro commutes.</p> <p>Environmental impacts: If riders stop using the buses, that means more cars driving on the road and parking in the neighborhood. According to Alexandria's Environmental Action Plan 2020, 36% of Alexandria's 2015 GHG inventory came from transportation. The Plan states a goal of reducing GHG emissions by 50% by 2030 and by 80-100% by 2050, with most reductions coming from the business and residential communities. It also states a goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled by 1% per year and increasing transit by 15% over 2018. The Environmental Action Plan also states that a mid-term action, targeting FY 2028, is to spend \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000 to encourage people who work in Alexandria to use sustainable transportation options. What impact will this change have on these goals?</p> <p>Alternatives: If DASH service must be reduced, DASH should consider changes to Line 103 instead of Line 104. Part of Line 103 (West Glebe, Valley, Martha Custis) is also serviced by Metrobus 10B, and areas between Russell Road and Mount Vernon Avenue can also be served by the Metrobus 10 lines. Line 103 riders may therefore have more alternative routes available in the system than Line 104 riders. DASH could also consider bringing back the 3/4 Loop so that Line 103 and Line 104 riders share the burden of a reduced schedule, instead of having Line 104 bear that entire burden.</p>
Thursday, February 29, 2024	<p>I have 3 kids who will be attending George Mason Elementary. Realistic plans for renovating or rebuilding the school are not a nice to have. They are a requirement. All we ask is for a realistic plan that sets our students up for success. Cutting \$20M right before the project is set to start with no explanation of what is getting cut is simply unacceptable. Our students need a facility they can thrive in. Not a half baked plan to nowhere. Fully fund the GM renovation project. We simply cannot afford our GM students to be left behind the rest of Alexandria students.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Thursday, February 29, 2024	<p>We have beautiful schools, with great teachers and school administrators, however, our logistics of getting kids to these nice schools remains wanting. In addition to spending on school budgets, which are critical, how about the city creates a budget for competitive compensation and training for school bus drivers? This would not require a large amount, yet it would be spending with high impact. The school bus situation (and correct incentives to get enough drivers and buses) in Alexandria needs more attention and financial support.</p> <p>Many thanks, Jozsef</p>
Thursday, February 29, 2024	<p>Is it true that the City will no longer include a budget for tree planting and maintenance? "Tree & Shrub Capital Maintenance" as a line item is gone.</p> <p>This cannot possibly be correct.</p> <p>I have watched as our city trees are butchered by contract tree trimmers, cut down for "development," and swallowed by invasive vines. Park trees are rarely pruned, and few new trees are planted as old ones die due to age and poor maintenance.</p> <p>I have also watched as city arborists leave in frustration due to lack of support by leadership with no one filling the two vacancies.</p> <p>So much for "Eco City"!</p>
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	<p>RE: CIP / DGS / Energy Management Program The Energy Management program plays a vital role in achieving the city's climate action goals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the scope of the \$367,000 reduction in project funding? 2. What scope is "pushed from FY 2025 – FY 2028 to FY 2029 – FY 2034"? 3. What else is meant by "Project scope reduced in coming years"?
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	<p>Arlington County has proposed a 4.75% pay increase for county employees for FY2025. If the City of Alexandria cares about retaining talented employees, a 2% pay increase is not enough to be competitive with neighboring Arlington County. Please consider investing more of the budget in City employee compensation.</p>
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	<p>Dear Council members and staff,</p> <p>I am writing with concern regarding the ACPS CIP budget, specifically around the messaging. The City's press release touted that the ACPS CIP budget would be fully funded at \$87m. However, the request for \$87m came from the Superintendent. The School Board (who is actually in charge of ACPS) requested \$107m.</p> <p>If you can't fund the \$107m because of other priorities — fine! Just tell the voters what those priorities are and why those priorities are more important than education. What is unacceptable is to pretend like the School Board's budget of \$107m just doesn't exist.</p> <p>I will be watching the work session tonight. Budgets are tough. Fortright communication with voters should be easy.</p> <p>Regards, Emily Turner</p>
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	<p>I urge you to please fully fund acps budget requests. There is arguably no more important component of a city's budget. Specifically the CIP cuts are egregious and have truly monumental impacts to thousands of residents. School quality and experience arguably touches every aspect of the life in our city. This is simply not the place to cut.</p>
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	<p>I'm really interested and excited to see a "Clean Team" proposal in the budget to help mitigate litter at the source. I've been urging the city to do more on litter and to try to stop it before it occurs so this is great to see.</p> <p>I saw it described as "delivering robust litter mitigation solutions within targeted public realms and areas experiencing heightened pedestrian activity." Can you expand on what that means and what that would look like in operation?</p>
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	<p>Hello. Thank you for your time and your devotion to our city. I am writing in regards to the CIP funding and specifically the George Mason rebuild. We have 2 kids, one a fifth grader at George Mason and the other a Freshman at Minnie Howard / ACHS. We have lived first across the street from and now around the corner from George Mason for 16 years. This is the 10th and final year that we will have a child at George Mason. There has been talk of tearing down and rebuilding George Mason for that entire time. We have also seen the population of GM drop by almost 50% from one daughter's class vs the other, related I gather to an unfortunate combination of redistricting and the pandemic colliding. GM is complicated. The geographic divide between the populations that attend the school do make it difficult to truly integrate the population, especially outside of the school day. The desired to be a truly integrated community is there. The school community spends a lot of effort to support each other through gift and gift card drives, busing to all school events, and the food pantry, for examples. I don't know how you would minimize the impact of the geographic divide. If you could, it would be great. But, the school has very good leadership now. I just ask that you make smart decisions regarding GM. The overcrowding at the middle school is a big problem and I don't hear anyone talking about building another middle school. Is there anything that could be done at GM to relieve middle school overcrowding. Has the data come in regarding the success of the K-8 schools? I think first and foremost I would ask you to make smart decisions regarding GM (don't short change green building to save money, don't take away the small amount of field space in this neighborhood). If you have to postpone the rebuild to do what is smart, please still make a firm timeline and put a stop to this decade long period of uncertainty in this community. There are a lot of people here at GM now who are supportive of the public schools, and I think you will find the community to be patient and supportive if things are done in a smart way. Thank you for hearing our concerns.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Wednesday, February 28, 2024	<p>Dear Mr. Parajon, Mr. Mayor, and Members of the Alexandria City Council,</p> <p>I am writing to ask you to please do whatever you can to fully fund the approved Alexandria City School Board FY25 CIP Budget amount of \$107,657,700 in the City of Alexandria FY25 Budget.</p> <p>I recognize that the budget process is a difficult one, and I do not pretend to fully understand its complexities. However, I trust that our School Board knows best what our district needs for its students and community after listening to their constituents during their own budget process. Their ask of \$87,000,000 for the rebuild of George Mason Elementary actually remains unchanged from what was approved by the city in FY24 for the 10 year plan, and that is because it takes into account all of the priorities for the school district and the city. Without the full funding, something has to give, and I can guarantee that if you put this back in the hands of the School Board, the city priorities will not take precedence.</p> <p>The rebuild was addressing the capacity issues that plague our schools by adding space in order to house more students. It was also addressing the city requirements for Green Building design and taking into account the only green space and playing fields that exist in the North Ridge community. And not the least of the issues being addressed with the rebuild was to replace a school that had long outlived its expiration date.</p> <p>As a mother of three children who attend George Mason Elementary in 5th grade, 3rd grade, and Kindergarten, I know very well the challenges that our students and educators face daily at a school that has been neglected for years due to the expectation that the rebuild would happen imminently. Covid set the rebuild back, understandably, but now we are faced again with the uncertainty of what this rebuild will actually look like for our George Mason community and the greater ACPS community.</p> <p>Education is the building block of a community and the investments we make in our schools pay for themselves. Please do not shortchange our schools, students, and educators by not funding their needs. Please fully fund the approved Alexandria City School Board FY25 CIP Budget amount of \$107,657,700.</p> <p>Thank you, Suzie O'Brien</p>
Tuesday, February 27, 2024	<p>Mayor Wilson, Council Members, and City Staff -</p> <p>Thank you for all the support you have provided to ALIVE! over the years, and especially for the very significant financial assistance you've made available for ALIVE!'s Food Program since the beginning of the pandemic. You have made it possible for ALIVE! to feed many more families and individuals in need in Alexandria than was the case before the pandemic. Also, as you know, ALIVE! now is providing more nutritious food in more locations, and the relatively new food hubs allow clients to select food that is appealing to and appropriate for them.</p> <p>In your development of the FY 2025 budget, I ask that you recognize that ALIVE!'s Food Program will not be able to continue to serve low income Alexandrians at the same level without continued substantial support from the City and do what you can to provide that support again in 2025. While it is the case that the economy is improving in a number of ways, the related benefits are not available to all. Food prices remain high, and those in need rely on the City and ALIVE! to offer assistance with this most basic need.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of this request.</p> <p>Ellen Brown ALIVE! Board Member and 25 year volunteer</p>
Monday, February 26, 2024	<p>I urge you to fully fund the ACPS requested budget. At this critical time in learning loss recovery from Covid, attracting and retaining high quality teachers, increase in special education needs and English Language services not to mention increased violence and drug challenges-- our schools need our resources. Strong, competitive, nurturing schools are THE BACKBONE of a city's future. Sacrifices must be made elsewhere. I urge you to fully fund ACPS's requested budget.</p>
Monday, February 26, 2024	<p>Covid really revealed the precarious nature of the lives of many low income Alexandrians. Unfortunately the level of need has not returned to pre-Covid levels. As an ALIVE! board member and volunteer, I have seen the difficulties faced by many of our neighbors. It is vitally important that the City of Alexandria continue to assist those struggling with food insecurity and who are on the verge of homelessness by supporting such efforts as ALIVE!'s food and family assistance programs.</p>
Saturday, February 24, 2024	<p>Encouraging support for ALIVE! Know you are all aware of the depth with which this org has responded to pandemic and continuing since. Thank you.</p>
Thursday, February 22, 2024	<p>Please approve the salary re-assessment requests that have been approved by DCHS. We are grossly underpaid in comparison to other jurisdictions.</p> <p>Please consider additional funding support for youth mental health needs.</p>
Wednesday, February 21, 2024	<p>I serve as a board member and volunteer with ALIVE! Helping on the Last Saturday food distributions. We give out so many bags of food and it seems that the line just never goes down! I love watching the faces of the families that are grateful for food but also sad to see so many in line. Sometimes we run out of food and it is heartbreaking to see folks wait for so long and then not receive. Please continue and increase funding to ALIVE! To help them continue to feed the hungry people in your and my city! Use ALIVE! As your hands and feet to get this work done with the hundreds of faithful volunteers in the city. The funding is crucial as the need continues to rise. Thanks for considering.</p>
Saturday, February 10, 2024	<p>I am concerned about the lack of affordable housing in the city, and the poor condition of low rent housing. As a city, we lose color and vibrancy if we do not remain inclusive (affordable) for all Americans.</p> <p>sincerely, charleen smith-riedel</p>

Date Received	Comment
Friday, February 9, 2024	<p>Mr. James F. Parajon City Manager Alexandria City Hall 301 King Street Alexandria, Virginia 22314</p> <p>Cc: Mayor Justin Wilson Vice Mayor Amy Jackson Members of the Alexandria City Council</p> <p>Dear Mr. Parajon,</p> <p>Thank you for your service to our community and for all of the hard work you are doing to prepare this year's City budget. As you finalize the FY2025 budget proposal for City Council review, the George Mason Elementary School (GMES) PTA respectfully asks that you fully fund Alexandria City Public Schools' (ACPS) Capital Improvements Program (CIP) request of \$107,657,700 with the full \$87,000,000 of that amount going to the GMES modernization project.</p> <p>George Mason Elementary School – built 85 years ago in 1939 – is the next of the City public schools to undergo a full modernization after a decade of discussion, preliminary planning, and delays. Our modernization is therefore the most sizable project in the CIP budget this year and must be fully funded in order to achieve ACPS and City priorities, including capacity and square footage requirements, public amenities and open space needs, and compliance with the City's stormwater mandates and Green Building Policy.</p> <p>Fully funding the ACPS request ensures that our GMES project can proceed as planned without compromising the funding needs of other ACPS capital projects this year and in the years to come.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration of this important request.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>The George Mason Elementary School PTA</p>
Tuesday, January 23, 2024	<p>"Eco-City Alexandria is a strategic effort to achieve sustainability. We seek to create an environmentally, economically and socially healthy city where people can live, work and play for decades to come." IS ALEXANDRIA REALLY AN ECO-CITY AS PROMOTED?</p> <p>If so, it would follow that you would please fully fund or as fully as possible fund:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) City Office of Climate Action 2) ACPS - sufficient funding to implement City green building and climate policies while meeting other student, facility, and teacher compensation needs. 3) WMATA and DASH - so as to continue important sustainable and equitable transportation services in our community. This is tied closely to climate and housing goals. 4) Affordable housing - that will help educators, public service workers, restaurant workers and others to be able to live where they work. But also using space wisely so as to balance livability and sustainability of what makes Alexandria attractive against those housing needs. <p>I am a constituent and also a member of Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions - Alexandria Hub.</p> <p>Thank you for all you do for Eco-Alexandria.</p>
Wednesday, December 20, 2023	<p>Dear City Council,</p> <p>I strongly ask that you increase librarian compensation in Alexandria. These libraries are fantastic resources for our kids, our oldest loves them and they are enriching to see as a parent. My child would do nothing but ask for more library time and continues to love it. The librarians have been nothing but fantastic, kind, generous, and warm. We should be increasing their pay considerably and it should be a top priority rather than below industry, and local, averages.</p>
Friday, December 15, 2023	<p>Salaries have fallen 16-20%, and we are losing librarians and staff! I support fair pay for Alexandria Library staff.</p>
Thursday, December 14, 2023	<p>As a committed fan of our libraries, I am writing to urge sufficient funding to ensure that our librarians and other library staff are paid competitive wages. They bring much value to our community. Let us honor that with compensation packages on par with those of neighboring jurisdictions.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Thursday, December 14, 2023	<p>I would like the steps restored for Alexandria City Public School teachers. This is approximately \$3M. I know that both the school budget and city funds this project. Our teachers would make up to \$18K more in neighboring school districts. They are leaving day-by-day. A fifth grade teacher left, a third grade teacher left at my sons' school, Naomi L. Brooks. There are parents who speak at the School Board meetings about staffing vacancies for core subjects in middle school and high school and my the budget book for ACPS reduces my son's fifth grade class next year to only two teachers. These are the students who had kindergarten and first grade in the pandemic virtually and need additional social emotional learning support. Our teachers deserve better compensation. Collective bargaining has yet to be enacted and I fear that before it is enacted, we will continue to see teachers and admin staff leave for Arlington, DCPS, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Prince William, Fall Church City.</p> <p>I would also like librarians at city of Alexandria libraries paid a competitive wage. Libraries are the hub of our community. We go to the Duncan Library each week to get books and movies and my boys to to the Barrett Library for programming such as the older elementary Dungeons and Dragons. Our library staff should be compensated fairly. In this city of progressive values, we must pay our staff wages that allow them to live in the communities they work. Librarians are community helpers and first line social workers for people of all different walks of life. The library is the hub of the community. My children started out attending Kids Rock Story Hour and Baby Storytelling. They progressed to reading programs, reading to dogs, Legos and Dungeons and Dragons. We went to many a Groovy Nate or Rainbow Rock Band aka our "kiddie Coachella". Now my boys gather with their classmates to play D&D, a program started by our Campagna Kids after care director in response to playgrounds and parks being closed. When she wanted to get kids off screens and interacting, she started this and when libraries and schools reopened, she continued this FREE program. My sons have formed lifelong friendships with their D&D friends from all different ACPS schools. Our librarians and libraries provide this program and they deserve a wage that is competitive to other jurisdictions. The provide so much more than books. They create community.</p>
Tuesday, December 12, 2023	<p>Hello, we are a 119 unit condominium and 40 townhome development. This is just one example of the population growth in Old Town North. The nearest glass recycling location is at the South end of Royal Street. Requesting the City consider placing a glass recycling dumpster somewhere in Old Town North. Thank you. Michael Spatz Venue Condominium Board President</p>
Tuesday, December 12, 2023	<p>I am writing to support an increase in salaries for our library staff. Beatley Central is the one I use most. The staff do their best and you can tell they are intensely service-oriented. It's sad to see the level of turnover as they have to support themselves and their families, something better done working elsewhere. We've unintentionally turned into a training pipeline entry point for other library systems.</p> <p>That's stupid and unnecessary. Let's give our library staff a competitive salary so the good people will stay.</p>
Monday, December 11, 2023	<p>I'd like to send my support for the City's Libraries, in particular Duncan Library. The staff there are all very helpful and have created programming that builds community connections. It is one of the places I can interact with people of all ages and get to know my neighbors better. I value having a branch so close to me and I think it is important to compensate the staff with a fair wages when considering the budget. Thank you.</p>
Monday, December 11, 2023	<p>I am writing today to plead with the City of Alexandria to increase the wages for our Librarians and Library Staff. As a member of Burke Branch Friends, I find it shameful that Alexandria Library can not retain qualified staff in big part to substandard salaries. This needs to change as our Library system is a huge asset to our community.</p> <p>Please make this happen, Jean McKean</p>
Sunday, December 10, 2023	<p>Hello,</p> <p>Please prioritize pay increases for our city library staff while working on the 2025 Operating Budget! Duncan library plays an important role in our family life, and we recognize the hard work and dedication that its staff bring to work each day. We hope that the city will recognize their efforts and phenomenal contribution to our community with a pay increase.</p> <p>Thank you, Tonia Gregory</p>
Friday, December 8, 2023	<p>I am writing to express my concern for the Alexandria library staff salaries. My family and I visit one of the Alexandria area libraries basically every day and are always greeted with welcoming smiles at each location. We mainly visit the Duncan Library and have loved taking advantage of all of the classes and offerings that the location offers. It is an invaluable asset to our community and it would have have huge negative impact if there were further disruptions in staffing and services due to changeover.</p> <p>I support fair pay for our library staff.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Friday, December 8, 2023	<p>re: Increasing Public Library Funding</p> <p>Dear City Council and Staff,</p> <p>Public libraries are the backbones of our communities. They provide crucial educational services, programs, and, of course, books. They level the playing field by allowing everyone access to the internet (crucial for career opportunities and job applications for the unsheltered or computer illiterate); provide spaces for community events and lectures; support and access to tools, training, and broader city resources. Public libraries are one of the greatest services a city can provide. Free and open to all, it is one of the most wonderful American public services. I love our libraries. I love being able to check out books, whether in person or via the Libby app. I love going to random lectures that the library hosts. I love asking for help from the librarians and always getting an attentive response.</p> <p>I was disappointed and horrified as an Alexandria resident to learn that Alexandria Library staff salaries have fallen behind by 16-20%, compared to our neighbors. This is understandably resulting in staff turnover and service disruption. Our taxes should go to promoting and maintaining our libraries *and their staff*. Librarians should be able to live and work in Alexandria on a decent and fair paycheck. That is not happening currently. Rather than spend more of the budget on police or other such entities, we should be ensuring our libraries and librarians--the true pillars of our community--are maintained and strengthened.</p> <p>Libraries do so much good, but they would be hollow buildings without the librarians making them an educational center, a community resource, a home for so many of us. Please increase the library funding in Alexanria's 2025 budget. The librarians deserve a fair wage, and Alexandria deserves a stellar library system.</p> <p>Sincerely, Michele Trichler</p>
Friday, December 8, 2023	<p>Support our local librarians! Libraries are vital to the community and librarians should be paid accordingly!</p>
Thursday, December 7, 2023	<p>I would like to recommend continued funding for the Office of Climate Action, funding to maintain green building standards, find funding to water trees you plant, and do not remove 65+ year old trees already existing in parks (Simpsons Baseball Fields) to build new bleachers.</p>
Thursday, December 7, 2023	<p>support sustainable tree canopy</p>
Thursday, December 7, 2023	<p>Increased salaries Alexandria library staff to stay competitive.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	First of all, thank you for your hard work in preparing a city budget. It's a big job and I know there are always tough decisions to make. That said, I hope you will consider making library services a priority in this year's budget allocations. I hear from my local branch we are falling behind in salaries, leading to turnover. The library services are a great benefit to our communities. Thank you for your consideration.
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	<p>Dear City Manager, Mayor and Council,</p> <p>In the FY 2025 budget, please prioritize funding for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DASH and WMATA - these well-run services are essential for Alexandria's workers, businesses, residents, and City climate change, equity & mobility goals. My family has one car, and we are regular DASH users. Please maintain existing service levels and enable improvements where needed. - City Office of Climate Action - addressing climate change now will save the City money later. Please ensure its full funding and programs. - ACPS capital needs, energy and climate resilience, staff compensation - we need to fund school rebuilds (George Mason, Cora Kelly, other capacity needs), and climate resilience. The City's Green Building Policy is at risk without adequate funding. These energy and climate resilience improvements to ACPS facilities will save operating funds and money overall. The district also needs good compensation for teachers and staff. - Affordable housing programs - please ensure these are funded. <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Bill Pugh 1200 N Quaker Ln Alexandria, VA 22302</p>
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	please pay teachers, social workers, and librarians more.
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	<p>As you begin to make the hard decisions about what does or does not get funded in the '24, I strongly encourage you to make fair pay for Alexandria's library staff not just a priority - but a reality.</p> <p>We are losing our hard-working and dedicated staff to libraries around AVA that pay higher salaries. As a result, positions go unfilled, programs and services the public expects get short-changed or cancelled and staff is overworked and burning out.</p> <p>Please do your part to fund Alexandria library salaries commensurate with what Arlington, Fairfax and D.C. is paying. We need to equitably support all our City's public servants.</p> <p>Patti Reilly Incoming Chair Friends of Duncan Library</p>
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	<p>Salaries have decreased for librarians and library staff--we need them paid a fair and equitable wage. Libraries are critical to citizens of all ages in the community providing a huge variety of resources.</p> <p>Please strongly consider increasing salaries in the coming city budget.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	Hello! It has been brought to my attention that salaries for librarians in Alexandria are approximately 16-20% below the neighboring jurisdictions, resulting in high turnover rates. This is unacceptable! Our librarians work hard to make the library a welcoming environment that is accessible to everyone in our community. Please make room in the budget to increase librarian pay!! Duncan Library is counting on you!
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	<p>Dear Council Members and City Manager,</p> <p>It is my current understanding that Alexandria Library staff are not paid commensurate with other local jurisdictions.</p> <p>You may wish to enlighten me whether this is absolutely the case, but if so, it is a concern, and I would urge bringing library staff up to local standards in the new budget.</p> <p>Thank you for all your essential work, Alan</p>
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	There is no better time to support the amazing professionals that populate our public library system.
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	<p>I'm writing to urge your full budget support for Alexandria's public libraries. As you know, our librarians' salaries have fallen behind nearby cities and counties, contributing to staff turnover.</p> <p>My husband and I regularly visit the Duncan Library. It's invaluable to people like us who read a lot. I love seeing the toddlers and other children attending read-aloud sessions with their parents--and teens doing their homework--and people of all ages being tutored in this safe and congenial space.</p> <p>Our libraries are essential and lively multi-service sites and deserve full funding from the City budget.</p> <p>Thank you, Nancy Kelly</p>
Wednesday, December 6, 2023	Please support the ADC resolution's request that pay adjustments be made to the Alexandria Library Staff across all staffing positions reflecting the current market levels in the DMV, ensure full staffing at all library locations, and extend collective bargaining rights to the Library Staff.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Please continue to fund these important initiatives for the City's climate change and equity goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Fully fund the City Office of Climate Action; 2) Provide sufficient funding to ACPS for it to implement City green building and climate policies while meeting other student and facility needs; 3) Fund WMATA and DASH needs to continue important sustainable and equitable transportation services in our community; and 4) Continue to fund important City affordable housing programs.

Date Received	Comment
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Please review the salaries of the Alexandria Public Library staff - pay rates have fallen 15-20%. The librarians do so much for our community and I see firsthand how they welcome neighbors and create fantastic gathering opportunities. Librarians are passionate about their work, like teachers, and go above and beyond. Please ensure that they are compensated for the immense impact they have on Alexandria. Losing staff hurts the community we are building. Thank you.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Just to let you all know how much I value my library and to urge you to support fair pay for library staff.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Please increase pay for library staff! Our libraries have become important community spaces. If we lose our library staff due to a lack of competitive compensation we will lose everything libraries can and do offer. Thank you Nathan Lefler
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Please increase librarian salaries ASAP. We have learned what happens when we don't pay the people we value in our community what they are worth - they go to neighboring districts. Please do not make the same mistake twice. Libraries are one of the critical hubs of our community and have smart, creative and hard-working staff that deserve to be paid what they are worth. Please increase their pay so we can keep this amazing talent in Alexandria. Thank you, Megan
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Our public library system is a major support for many elements of this community. It is underfunded and its staff significantly underpaid. I hope the new budget will provide (much) better for the Alexandria Library system.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	I wish to request your urgent consideration of increasing the budget for all Alexandria City libraries so that employee staff salaries are compensated appropriately compared to neighboring jurisdictions. Of all City resources that I personally use, the libraries are number one on my list. Not only because of my use, but because of the nations attack on literature. Do not allow such an important resource to degrade simply because high tech influences are in the forefront. Thank you
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Please include increased pay for our library staff in the next city budget planning process!
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	One of Alexandria's greatest assets is our libraries. And library staff is what makes our libraries so special. At a community event this summer a member of Library staff did children's time in Pat Miller Square, entertaining children while parents took part in the community event. This is just one example of our library staff going beyond the call. I am particularly concerned that library staff is paid significantly less than other jurisdictions. As a result, we are losing qualified staff, which is stressing staff who remain. As the city manager and council develop the city budget, I request they make library funding a priority. Our libraries serve tens of thousands of patrons a month, meeting a litany of needs. I have heard that families come from other jurisdictions to utilize our library programming, and then they patronize local businesses either before or after the event. I hope that city staff and members of the council understand our library system is both an economic development driver and a community resource, and as a result, provide them the funding for staff and for resources to meet the need they address.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Hi, I understand that the city is facing shortfalls. However I would ask that you look to prioritize salary increases in line with inflation and in line with neighbouring jurisdictions for library workers. We are struggling to hold on to our library workers in Alexandria and libraries provide such a critical service for our youth and community.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Hi, I'm a regular user of our public library system—I've checked out more than 50 books this year at Duncan Branch alone—and I hope you'll include significant raises for all library staff in the next city budget. The neighborhood library system is a big part of why my family chose to buy a house in Alexandria this year instead of moving to a cheaper area in Maryland, and the staff who make the system as amazing as it is deserve monetary recognition for their hard work.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	As a 20-year resident of Alexandria (who always votes), I have relied on the city libraries for all kinds of services. I borrow books from and volunteer at the Duncan Library; I participate in book discussions and other activities such as the "Fix-it Days" at Barrett Library. I also belong to a long-standing Knitting group there; we have donated hundreds of our handmade items to charitable organizations in Alexandria. The group is organized and run by a city librarian. I am always saddened to hear that our librarians' salaries are not commensurate with neighboring library systems'. I have observed that our librarians work as hard and are as generous with their talents as any other librarians. Please recognize the important role these city employees consistently play in the lives of us ordinary citizens and budget for their well-deserved raises. Thank heaven for our librarians!
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	I believe that the City's budget needs to fully fund ACPS capital needs, which include meeting the City's Green Building Policy, as well as other important student capacity and instructional needs. The budget needs to also fully fund the Office of Climate Action and provide funding for DASH and WMATA.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	I have just learned of salary cuts in our library system. We value our libraries so much for our children and education. Please take this into consideration for the new budget. Thank you so much
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	hello, I'm writing because I value my library and support fair pay for library staff. Alexandria Library staff salaries have fallen behind by 16-20%, compared to neighboring jurisdictions. We're seeing an alarming rate of turnover, as staff leave Alexandria for higher salaries in Fairfax County, Arlington and Washington, D.C. This is causing disruptions in the services Alexandria Library can provide. Please help us retain our valued librarians and keep our library services up and running by factoring in fair salaries for our Alexandria library staff. Thanks! --Bryanne Reynolds
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Alexandria's libraries are one of the best benefits for residents, and our libraries are doing a fabulous job of ensuring access to all books and other media, especially at a time when libraries and librarians are being harassed and criticized in various parts of the country. But our librarians are underpaid compared with neighboring jurisdictions and we have seen an alarming turnover of staff. I treasure our libraries and support fair pay for our library staff. Please consider pay increases for our library staff in the upcoming budget. Thank you.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Please support Duncan Library! We rely on their services for ourselves and our grandchildren. Supplementing their education is very important to the community.
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	Libraries - we need them - please increase the pay and any needed staffing - there are many volunteers who raise money - and do things but you can do this - libraries are integral to lowering crime, educating our communities - and now that you have passed the new zoning you should know that you have to support infrastructure and education - so don't hesitate - do the right thing here - esp since you seem to support getting rid of single family housing - you have the responsibility to support the resources needed to round out the effort you have pushed thru.

Date Received	Comment
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Hi, I'm writing today in support of our public libraries and librarians. Please consider raising the pay of our important staff that has not been increased recently and is lagging behind our neighboring areas, as well as the budgets for these key institutions that faithfully serve the community of Alexandria.</p> <p>Thank you, Charlotte</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I love Duncan library! Please make room in the budget for salary increases for librarians and staff in the Alexandria library system.</p> <p>Thank you. Nancy Haney</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Dear Alexandria Councilmembers and staff:</p> <p>As you prepare the city budget, PLEASE prioritize library funding! Briefly - I visit the library about once per week, and am online for information approximately daily. As an Alexandria resident and taxpayer, as well as a volunteer Alexandria school reading mentor, I assure you that it is a critical service as well as foundational investment for the future of Alexandria.</p> <p>Forgive me if I share that I grew up in Pennsylvania, one of 7 children of a steelworker and his wife, neither of whom graduated high school. I absolutely credit my local public library for the inspiration and opportunity which eventually led to my doctoral degree. There are many Alexandrians with much potential in many, many areas who need and are enriched by our public libraries. Please be generous and support and motivate our local talented staff to fully invest themselves in our citizens.</p> <p>Thank you, Elizabeth Talian, Doctor of Occupational Therapy</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Dear City Council members,</p> <p>PLEASE do not ignore the City's libraries. I understand that staff salaries have fallen significantly compared to other local jurisdictions. My 13yo daughter is an avid reader, and she uses the Duncan library a lot. She will very often while away an afternoon there, browsing and reading, and she borrows a lot of books too. Among other things, libraries are a safe space for our teenagers and a huge gift to the community of free and accessible books to borrow.</p> <p>Yours, Carolyn McKee</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I am a Senior living very close to the Duncan library for over 25 years. I have no computer or smartphone so only use the public computer here. I have also been in the bookclub here, and I read a lot, so nearly constantly have books checked out. For all these years, the staff has been very patient, generous and helpful. I love this library and I understand the is a lot of staff turnover due to salaries. There is a wonderful group of young people here now and I truly hope you seriously consider doing what is necessary to keep the staff and other library services going strong.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Please support the Alexandria libraries. Thank you.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>My family welcomed our first child this year and we've had the privilege to experience the different baby programs provided by our local libraries. The staff at each library is incredibly professional, passionate about their jobs, and create such a wonderful environment. Our library staff should be appropriately compensated for the amazing work they do (they deserve a raise!) in our communities.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>The Duncan Library does a fantastic job in instilling the love of reading in our children. From the earliest days, libraries were the source of knowledge and inspiration for all. Right now, libraries are more important than ever in empowering our citizens and defending our democratic future.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Please add Library staff to your list of salary increases for government employees. They are an invaluable asset to our community of readers, young and old. We would be remiss if they were not considered as essential as first responders. They are on the front line of the culture wars, making sure that we have materials available to make informed decisions, protecting us and our children from random censorship.</p> <p>And they help make reading so enjoyable!</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I know there is a possible budget shortfall for next year but please do not take this out on Alexandria's libraries. Our libraries and especially their staff need funding more than ever.</p> <p>I am a volunteer at the Duncan Branch and frequently witness the crucial place our libraries and their staff have in our city whether it is through children's programming, access to computers or a warm place to read.</p> <p>Alexandria Library staff salaries have fallen behind by 16-20%, compared to neighboring jurisdictions. We're seeing an alarming rate of turnover, as staff leave Alexandria for higher salaries in Fairfax County, Arlington and Washington, D.C. This is causing disruptions in the services Alexandria Library can provide.</p> <p>Our library staff deserves to be paid on equal footing with the rest of the area!</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I understand that we are expecting a budget shortfall this year, which is hard news. I am writing to express my support for the services that support everyone, like schools and libraries, and the people who make it possible to benefit from them. I also support programs like the composting pilot, and efforts to conserve our natural environment. These services support everyone and should be protected from the worst of budget cuts.</p> <p>I acknowledge that I don't have a good sense of what to cut or defer. I thank you for tackling this difficult work.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Dear City Council-</p> <p>If you were to walk down Commonwealth Ave around 10am on most week day mornings you would see a line of strollers and children eagerly awaiting the doors to open at Duncan Library. Children, Moms, Dads, Babysitters, Grandmas and Grandpas find comfort, joy, FUN, and even safety inside the walls of our public libraries. These public libraries are the very heart and soul of our community. They deserve fair pay (+ more) for the tireless employees and to the programs they provide to the people of Alexandria. In a time when life is expensive and difficult, the library is a place we can ALL go and escape. My children met life long friends while listening to Ms. Vlnetta singing and hopping to "Sleeping Bunny". The love of books and reading began inside Duncan library. I continue my love of reading thanks to the incredible offerings from the Alexandria Public library system. I urge you to take a minute and think about the importance our public libraries have on our community and give them the financial backing and support they so deserve. Thank you.</p> <p>Jennifer Barksdale</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Alexandria Library staff salaries have fallen behind by 16-20%, compared to neighboring jurisdictions. This leads to a high rate of turnover, as staff leave Alexandria for higher salaries in Fairfax County, Arlington and Washington, D.C. Librarians are an essential service for a civilized society. Public Libraries are one of the great purveyors of help to the marginalized, the elderly, and to the low income people in our community. They provide connection, access to knowledge and real assistance with everything from filing taxes to applying for jobs. Our library staff need a raise. I know the city budget is tight this year, but they are overdue for a bump in pay.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>PLEASE support fair pay for library staff in the city of Alexandria. The libraries are an essential part of the city and of endless importance for making our city literate and educated. Our neighborhood libraries are gathering places for people of ALL ages, with wonderful programs of involvement. PLEASE prioritize this request and pay our library staffs fairly so they are not leaving for better paid positions in other jurisdictions.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Please support salary increases for Alexandria Library staff, whose pay has fallen behind by 16%-20% in recent years. Low salaries are resulting in an alarming rate of turnover, which strains and limits library services. When staff are constantly called upon to interview and train new employees, it takes away from their engagement with the community and the services they can provide. I was with Alexandria Library leadership who said they were "hemorrhaging" staff. More than half of library staff are part-timers, and it is hard to recruit for (and replace) those positions, though part-timers are essential to the operations of the branches. We appreciate that the City Manager's office conducted a compensation study, but I have concerns that the position descriptions in Alexandria Libraries may have been different from those they were compared to in other library systems. Alexandria Library staff have been made to do more with less, which may not be reflected in a position description. Please release the compensation study results and methodology to the public so that we can have confidence in the City's recommendations for increasing staff pay to fair levels. There was previously a compensation study and no action was taken as a result. Please don't let this happen again — we can no longer delay a living wage. It's becoming harder and harder to afford being a librarian in the City of Alexandria. Thank you for being open to public feedback and for requesting public input on the budget. Fair pay is a many-years-long effort but needs to start now. Thank you.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I support fair pay for city librarians.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Alexandria is a wonderful place to live because it recognizes that a community is judged not just by its roads, but how it cares and supports its residents. A vibrant public library is part of the foundation of caring for the vitality of a community.</p> <p>It has come to my attention that Alexandria Library staff salaries have fallen behind by 16-20%, compared to neighboring jurisdictions. We're seeing an alarming rate of turnover, as staff leave Alexandria for higher salaries in Fairfax County, Arlington and Washington, D.C. This is causing disruptions in the services Alexandria Library can provide.</p> <p>I encourage that the city council to recognize and address Alexandria Library staff salaries.</p> <p>Respectfully submitted, Robbin Warner</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Hello,</p> <p>I am a Friend of Duncan Library. This library is an important resource for our community. Please include fair wages for its staff in the upcoming budget.</p> <p>thanks, Barbara Haley</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I am in favor of raising library staff pay (and other underpaid city employees) even if it means increasing taxes.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Libraries and librarians are vital resources for the children of Alexandria. As a mom of two young sons, we find ourselves at library events and programs multiple times a week. The availability of these programs as well as the positivity and educational value brought by the library staff is a key reason my family continues to live in the city of Alexandria and supports the Duncan Library with a donation every year. Please consider increasing the budget to keep library programs and salaries to incentivize the wonderful staff to remain in the Alexandria City library system.</p> <p>Thank you, Liz Connors-Fogle</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>The Duncan Library is our favorite! We hope you'll do all you can to increase the librarians' pay. They are so amazingly helpful.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Please ensure that the staff at city libraries are adequately paid in the upcoming budget. Our libraries are amazing community resources that we often take for granted. They are a free and welcome place to learn, grow and gather for all segments of our diverse community. They contribute to equity in so many ways, for children and adults. If Alexandria cannot offer competitive pay, the libraries will not be able to retain staff and maintain the library hours and services that so many Alexandrians rely on, enjoy, and deserve.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I am writing to support increasing the salaries of librarians. I wrote before last spring's budget hearings on the same topic. My understanding was there was to be a study about librarian compensation and how it compared to neighboring jurisdictions. Was this study ever done. The problem of losing library staff to neighboring communities continues. I realize that funding is tight, but I think trade-offs need to be considered that would enable higher library salaries.</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Support Alexandria libraries, PLEASE!!! As a military spouse new to the area, it was the first place I felt welcome and supported with community programs and resources. Please fund this important community resource by increasing the librarian salary for Alexandria, VA. Help these vital employees to continue to provide stellar services to locals like me who greatly appreciate and rely on them. From a young age, Libraries have always been a joy and necessity to me. Please don't let this infrastructure die. Support fair pay for Libraries!!!</p> <p>Sincerely, Joanna Spaethe</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I understand that our libraries are underfunded and that staff are leaving for neighboring jurisdictions. Please increase funding for them in the Fiscal Year 2025 operating budget. Your libraries provide valuable service for our citizens.</p> <p>Thank you, Beth Roberts</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>Our libraries provide so many resources to our community: safe space, books, music, classes, events and all at no additional cost to Alexandria residents. The beloved librarians make these offerings possible and also provide support and instruction on how to use the resources or find the best ones.</p> <p>Librarians have advanced degrees; a Masters in Library/Information Science. They are learned information experts, many bringing years of experience to Alexandria residents. They deserve competitive salaries, comparable with those of our neighbors of Arlington and Fairfax.</p> <p>Please ensure that our city's budget takes into account librarian salaries and annual increases that will keep our talent within Alexandria.</p> <p>Thank you, Wendy Maines</p>
Tuesday, December 5, 2023	<p>I fully support our public library system, and I think it is critical they are fully funded to hire their staff at competitive wages to continue serving our community effectively.</p>

Date Received	Comment
Monday, December 4, 2023	<p>Hello City of Alexandria! I am reaching out to you to advocate for funding and resources I find to be crucial for our community</p> <p>1) Continue investing in initiatives for climate change! This includes fully funding the City Office of Climate Action, funding for city green infrastructure and climate policies for public locations including ACPS, fund WMATA and DASH to continue sustainable AND equitable transportation services in our community</p> <p>2) Provide funding to reach new heights in equity! This would include funding city affordable housing programs and funding for government grants for impoverished communities and immigrant communities. Alexandria is such a diverse area and our support for those communities must reflect that.</p> <p>3) Continue to offer support and resources for those affected by crises From victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, homelessness, to natural disasters and beyond, Alexandria has a responsibility to fund programs that support its civilians and provide comprehensive information to access those resources.</p>
Monday, December 4, 2023	<p>We *need* to take care of our environment. Please prioritize City Office of Climate Action, ensure *all* City buildings, vehicles and infrastructure are moving towards Zero-Emissions and water conservation goals, and initiatives that remediate environmental damage due to historical social injustices.</p> <p>Also, please expand the incentives for homeowners to improve water and energy conservation: specifically for those of us who have an opportunity to reduce runoff more significantly than just rain barrels and semipermeable surfaces.</p> <p>My property receives substantial rainwater runoff from Quaker Lane stormwater system and the City has so far provided precious little value, advice, support for me. When I complained that the outgoing culvert was in danger of clogging a few years ago after an unusual downpour, you sent a crew to clear it out, but they commented that they didn't even know of the existence of that drainage ditch, so there's essentially no support or maintenance. The stormwater report of 2016 shows where it is, but again, no acknowledgement from the City on what needs to be done to protect and maintain it.</p> <p>Lastly, what are you doing to improve oversight of utility performance here in the City? The number of low-water pressure and watermain break events is... Staggering. So are the number of power outages: I put in battery backup because I could not work from home: in the past 22 months, my system reports 46 power outages, for a total of 18 hours, with the longest outage being 9 hours. Please hold Dominion Energy accountable for better, more reliable service. The cost in work@home productivity and appliance repairs from power interruptions is frankly inexcusable inside the beltway, especially for an area that is so high-tech. Ditto on ISP service options - Comcast only? seriously?</p> <p>And actually, really lastly - sorry to kvetch and complain so much, because I really do appreciate your service and how great Alexandria is. The culture and ambiance of this City is wonderful: we not only have a rich and beautiful architectural history, but you've highlighted the racial reconciliation that is long overdue; and our libraries, parks and community centers are a highlight. I hope our public schools and social services can be bolstered up to reduce crime and the amount of time APD has to spend investigating it.</p>
Monday, December 4, 2023	<p>The schools need to fully comply with the City's Green Building Policy to protect the future for children. It would be unconscionable to want to help children with education, but fail to protect the future they are destined to live in by not supporting and complying with the GBP. The City issued the edict and it is mandatory for the schools to comply. They have already failed to do that at Douglas MacArthur and Minnie Howard since they will not get solar panels for at least a year after they begin operating. And what will you say to the developers who want extra time to comply? Climate action delayed is no different than climate denial - we need a school board that believes in the science and responds accordingly. Now is not the time to back down from the requirement. Work with the new Office of Climate Action to find ways to meet the requirement. We can find the funds. West Virginia just voted to include solar on their schools. WEST VIRGINIA!!!! Is Alexandria going to fall behind West Virginia? And is this how we support our Eco-City designation? How will you justify this to the media and parents when they ask?</p>
Friday, December 1, 2023	<p>Hello City Council,</p> <p>I'm keen to share some commentary on City's FY25 budget, particularly in support of climate action. I respectfully request that the budget:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fully funds ACPS capital needs, which include meeting the City's Green Building Policy, as well as other important student capacity and instructional needs - Fully funds the Office of Climate Action - Provides funding for DASH and WMATA <p>Thank you!</p>
Sunday, November 26, 2023	<p>Dear City Leaders, I am proud that my city is making forward slides to address the multiple challenges we have to ensure that we address the climate issues we share with surrounding jurisdictions, the nation, and the world. Thank you for what you have done to date.</p> <p>As a member of the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, I am writing to urge you to do two primary things: 1) Fully fund the City Office of Climate Action and 2) Provide sufficient funding to ACPS for it to implement City green building and climate policies while meeting other student needs.</p> <p>Only by keeping the OCA well staffed and central to the city's decision making and implementation processes can we ensure that we continue moving forward in a comprehensive way. In addition, ACPS has a long way to go to catch up with the needed changes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make the system climate-ready and a model for the students who will be leading these efforts well into the future.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.</p> <p>Sincerely, Donna Gold, FACS Alexandria Hub</p>
Sunday, November 26, 2023	<p>Hi budget team,</p> <p>I am eager to advocate for areas of the budget related to climate change. Environmentalism is my number one issue as a voter and resident. Specifically, for this budget, I urge you to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -continue to fully fund the Office of Climate Action -provide needed funding to ACPS so that it can implement the City's Green Building Policy, while modernizing schools and support facilities to meet district needs (these things can go hand in hand!) -and fund development of a comprehensive energy and climate resilience strategy by ACPS to help implement Alexandria's Climate Change Action Plan. <p>In addition to these, please do everything you can to fund climate change action and engage residents in the process — we are fired up to help!</p> <p>Jamie Biondi</p>
Sunday, November 26, 2023	<p>1) Continue to fully fund the Office of Climate Action</p> <p>2) Provide needed funding to ACPS so that it can implement the City's Green Building Policy, while modernizing schools and support facilities to meet district needs, and</p> <p>3) Fund development of a comprehensive energy and climate resilience strategy by ACPS to help implement Alexandria's Climate Change Action Plan.</p>

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Sunday, November 26, 2023	<p data-bbox="373 134 798 155">Please continue to fully fund the Office of Climate Action,</p> <p data-bbox="373 172 1596 232">Provide needed funding to ACPS so that it can implement the City's Green Building Policy, while modernizing schools and support facilities to meet district needs, and Fund development of a comprehensive energy and climate resilience strategy by ACPS to help implement Alexandria's Climate Change Action Plan.</p>
Sunday, November 26, 2023	<p data-bbox="373 240 1969 272">Please continue to fully fund the Office of Climate Action. Alexandria must provide funding to ACPS so it may implement the City's Green Building Policy, while modernizing schools and support facilities to meet district needs. The city must fund development of a comprehensive energy and climate resilience strategy by ACPS to help implement Alexandria's Climate Change Action Plan.</p>