



The First Presbyterian Church of Howard County

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March 6, 2023

Howard County Executive Calvin Ball
Jacqueline Scott, Director of Community Resources and Services
Members of the Howard County Council (District 2 Member Opel Jones)
Dr. Mariana Izraelson, Executive Director, Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center

Our congregation, First Presbyterian Church of Howard County, believes deeply in our mission of helping those with fewer resources, including in our home county. We have a long history of funding and partnering with important nonprofit organizations that make this county a better place to live for everyone. We are long-term supporters of Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center and the Cold Weather Shelter in particular since its beginning in 2004.

We write to convey our Session's (our governing body) **unanimous thanks for allocating the funds to enable the CWS residents to reside at the Extended Stay America hotel.** This is a humane, caring and efficient use of public funds.

We ask that you continue to allocate funds so that the CWS can remain in hotels, and that you make this decision before the season starts to enable adequate planning. We also ask that you seek to find a long-term, sustainable solution to the problem of homelessness in the county.

For many years, we winced to see shelter residents leave our warm church at 7:00 a.m., and go out in the cold. Many of them simply wandered around the Mall in Columbia until it was time to return in the evening. Some of them had babies in their arms, and we despaired at how they would entertain infants and toddlers for that long day. Many were so tired, especially after not sleeping well on the floor and in group rooms. Germs spread so easily. Having a private place, where they could sleep in a bed, wash when they wanted to, nurture their children (and where children could do homework), rest if they are ill, be able to count on the same transportation arrangements every week, and have some dignity is a vast improvement.

Although it would be hard to measure other benefits quantitatively, we feel it is likely that a more comfortable, safe, and stable place to live means that the children are better able to learn, and adults are more able to work.

When the CWS shelter was first created, it was supposed to be a temporary method to address an urgent, burgeoning problem. The faith communities were never intended to be the permanent solution. Now, many years later, we thank you for beginning to move towards providing residents with a dignified, comfortable place to sleep when they have no other recourse, and urge you to continue this path.

Unanimously approved by the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Howard County, Maryland on February 28, 2023.

Sue Lowcock Harris and Morton Harris, Co-Pastors

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