

January 1, 2010

The Honorable Martin O'Malley
The State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley:

We are an interfaith coalition of 150 congregations. Our Mission is to pursue social justice with an emphasis on identifying and meeting the needs of the poor by leading and engaging Montgomery County's faith communities in service, education and advocacy. Our priorities are based upon more than 37 years of experience as Interfaith Works (formerly Community Ministry of Montgomery County) on the front line with 35,000 low-income residents of Montgomery County. Our fragile safety net is fraying, and we ask for your leadership at this difficult time. We urge you to protect our most vulnerable neighbors by prioritizing and holding harmless safety net services such as food, clothing and shelter as difficult budget decisions are enacted.

Interfaith Works' priorities for the coming year are:

Health and Well-Being

- We support the Maryland Health Care for All! Plan and encourage expanding access to health insurance.
- Restore funds to the state public mental health system for appropriate mental health services.

Workforce Opportunities

- Designate funding to train and employ members of our low income community in green jobs.
- Sustain adult basic education, ESOL, literacy and financial literacy services and provide greater access and funding for employment and job training programs for low-wage workers.
- Restore funding for after-school care, day care and gang prevention programs.
- Allow persons convicted of minor nuisance crimes to apply to have these crimes cleared from their public records to enhance employment opportunities.

Housing & Energy

- Identify stimulus funding which supports green energy and improves the energy efficiency of affordable housing.
- Support initiatives to relieve the burden of high costs for utilities for low-income households, and to optimize energy utilization, conservation and affordability.
- Sustain foreclosure prevention initiatives, with a priority of avoiding eviction.
- Support growth of the Maryland Affordable Housing Trust

Too many of our neighbors are without adequate services and decent housing and the numbers continue to grow. In light of the state's current fiscal crisis, we will support balanced and fairly distributed revenue raising measures to maintain or improve programs promoting self-sufficiency for Maryland's neediest citizens.

Best regards,
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