



February 28, 2020

The Honorable Bob Mendes  
Chair, Budget and Finance Committee  
One Public Square, Suite 106  
Nashville, TN 37201

Dear Council Member Mendes,

Thank you for hosting community budget meetings to receive feedback about the upcoming FY 2021 Metro Nashville budget. We appreciate the opportunity to give feedback and share our perspective.

As a local funder who is often asked to meet the unmet needs of Davidson County residents, we have seen firsthand how the growth of our city is causing issues that government must play a role in addressing. Our resources, and all the resources of private foundations, vastly pale in comparison to Metro Government, and our communities are desperate for help in resolving ever widening divides in education, health, and housing.

Last year, a group of local funders provided one-time match support funding so that Metro Schools could continue their Trauma-Informed Schools programs. This work was originally funded by a state grant that ended and they needed to transition funding to the operating budget. It is our understanding that MINPS will support this programming on an ongoing basis through the operations budget. We would appreciate the Council's help with this. Supporting trauma-informed schools and the raises that were promised to teachers are first steps in addressing educational disparities in our schools.

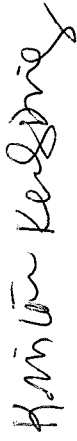
In addition to strengthening our educational system, local government needs to continue supporting the creation of more affordable housing. Housing is healthcare, and the lack of it is a public health issue. As you may know, the Barnes Fund is an effective catalyst in creating more housing. In previous years, the Barnes Fund received \$20 million in requests from affordable housing developers who were ready to use those funds to help slow down the affordable housing crisis. This is twice as much as was available in funding. With only a \$5 million allocation, the Barnes Fund can only fund a quarter of the amount needed to do the work. For every dollar our city puts into affordable housing development through the Barnes Fund, we leverage \$5 in private funding. That is a great return on investment for our community.

As a funder of domestic violence shelters and residential substance abuse treatment centers, we are concerned about the impact that the Barnes Fund cuts have on our community members who are trying to move into safety and stability. Our nonprofit partners who work with community members in

transitional housing or shelters constantly tell us about their residents who are ready to leave but cannot do so due to the lack of affordable housing for them to call home. This means the next time a person needs to escape a violent home, there might not be a place for them to go for safety. Or the next time someone needs to enter a recovery program, there will not be a bed because it is occupied by someone who cannot secure housing elsewhere.

We understand the vast and varying needs our Metro budget must address, from supporting our public education system to supporting the development of affordable housing for marginalized communities to supporting those on the front lines of service delivery - our teachers, social workers, police officers and others serving our communities. We respectfully request that the Council pass a budget that reflects the values of our community and fully funds our Metro Nashville Public Schools and the Barnes Fund.

Thank you for your service and leadership,



Kristen Keely-Dinger  
President & CEO  
The Healing Trust