

Communication in Support of Council Efforts to Allocate Marijuana Excise Tax Rebate Monies Toward Social Services

Local social service and safety net agencies have experienced significant funding challenges in the last few years,

The city of Ann Arbor continues to receive large windfalls through the Marijuana Excise Tax Rebate,

The Mental Health and Public Safety millage rebate has an established 40, 40, 20 spending plan,

The Affordable Housing Millage is capped in what can be spent on social services,

The Climate Action Millage, along with portions of the Mental Health millage rebate, have been earmarked for achieving the city's sustainability goals,

Eviction courts have resumed, disproportionately affecting, single mothers and mothers of color,

Barrier Busters is a group of 100+ social service agencies committed to improving services and responding to emergencies for Washtenaw County residents and well positioned to prevent evictions and utility shut-offs; and assist with other emergency costs that threaten residents' housing and financial stability. Based on Barrier Busters 2021 Annual Report, 132 Ann Arbor City families received assistance in the amount of \$87,004, well exceeding the City allocations in 2021. Barrier Busters is funded by voluntary contributions from City of Ann Arbor residents who round up their fees from utility services with city staff indicating that these voluntary contributions have typically added up to \$10-15K per year yet city staff has previously anticipated that requests from City of Ann Arbor residents would exceed \$120,000 in 2022.

In 2021, council resolved (R-21-098) to allocate this revenue "for such purposes specifically related to restorative and alternative strategies for public safety and community support such as: Emergency Services response that include mental health and substance use disorder professionals; Programs for substance abuse intervention, treatment and recovery support services; Education and enrichment programs for at-risk youth; and Innovation grants toward promoting criminal diversion and expungement, support for formerly incarcerated members of our community, and other criminal justice reform initiatives."

In that same resolution council directed the city administrator to "collaborate with Washtenaw County and request matching funds from the County for coordinated programming to promote these goals" and "to consider application of these funds or creation of programs to receive this funding starting in FY2022 and includes consideration of using the funds in all future budgets moving forward."

Stable housing and support services are a recognized way of supporting mental health needs, important resources for returning citizens, and critically important to children's social-emotional wellbeing and academic success.

Social safety net programs are best able to meet the needs of the community when they can rely on stable funding.

The Housing and Human Services Advisory Board (HHSAB) supports the in-progress Council budget resolutions to use currently unallocated funds from the Marijuana Excise Tax Rebate (understood to be about \$1,000,000) to support eviction prevention, wrap-around support services, and youth supportive services. HHSAB encourages Council to move toward making these allocations permanent and ongoing as the Marijuana market becomes more stabilized.