

Public Comments Received for the January 3, 2022
Work Session Meeting
(The Deadline for Comments was Sunday, January 2nd at 2pm)

Comment 1: Jim Svava (Received Saturday, January 1, 2022 at 10:29pm)

Dear Members of the Durham Board of County Commissioners,

I would like to ask you to encourage the Department of Social Services Board of Directors to extend the deadline for the Low-Income Homeowners Relief Program to January 31.

DSS Director Ben Rose informed me that there were only 186 applications as of December 23. 51 had been approved, 47 denied, and 88 were pending. There was limited staff assistance available in the final weeks of December, and there were three county holidays between December 23 and the December 31 deadline. We are afraid that many qualifying homeowners who need the assistance will be left out.

It is difficult to inform the public of a new program. Although information about the program was sent to all homeowners with their property tax bill, the final name of the program was not included in that insert, and the eligibility level was set at 30% AMI, although those with income up to 60% of the Area Median Income could be placed on a waiting list in case the program were expanded. Later the eligible income was raised to 60% AMI and those with income up to 80% AMI could be placed on a waiting list. Community organizations promoting the program were delayed in developing their own promotional material until the program details were finalized.

We urge you to extend the deadline for applications through the end of January. In the outreach we are doing to promote the program, we have recommended that homeowners pay their full tax bill by the January 5 tax deadline if they are applying close to the deadline for the LIHR grant. The same would apply to persons who apply for the grant after December 31 if the deadline is extended. The Tax Administration Office will pay the grant if approved to the homeowner when the full tax bill has already been paid.

I understand that the DSS Board is holding a special meeting today--January 3. Please indicate to the Board your support for the extension that will increase the number of low-income homeowners that can benefit from this innovative program.

Comment 2: DeWarren Langley (Received Sunday, January 2, 2022 at 12:04pm)

The Youth Home was a substantial investment of \$30 million dollars to keep our youth who require confinement in their community where we can ensure access to high quality services and provide greater access to their family. The equation is unbalanced if we do not have a collective impact strategy and plan with equal or greater financial commitment to ensure our youth have

the support, resources and opportunities to grow and develop to prepare them to lead meaningful and successful lives.

According to data from Durham Police Department, over 95% of the city's gun violence victims and perpetrators are black boys and young men. According to academic achievement and discipline data from Durham Public Schools, boys of color, specifically black boys, have the lowest percentage that met minimum grade level proficiency and college and career readiness while also having the highest short- and long-term suspensions since 2015. The most juvenile petitions and confinements at the Youth Home have consistently been boys of color (BOC).

We are not doing enough to educate, equip and empower boys and young men in color (BYMOC) in Durham! The data shows we are failing them and they deserve better!

In December, I attended MBK University 101: Developing and Launching Your Local MBK Action Plan of My Brother's Keeper Alliance which provided insights and strategies to develop, complete and launch a Local Action Plan to serve as a living, breathing document that guides work, is reported out on and is assessed and evolved as necessary. In addition, representatives from an MBK community shared about their journey launching their plan and honors the ongoing work. I was the only presentative from Durham present.

While I understand the administration is engaging in an operational assessment of MBK Durham to conduct an analysis that evaluates operations and processes to identify opportunities for improvement, stakeholder engagement is essential if we are to ensure MBK Durham has the leadership, governance structure and community support to build and sustain an ecosystem that provides responsive services that ensure boys of color enter school ready to learn, reading at level, graduating from high school ready for college and career, completing postsecondary education or training and successfully entering the workforce.

I am reaching out to again advocate for the creation of a My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Durham Advisory Board to provide the leadership and accountability required for a robust collective impact strategy that can transform the quality of life of boys and young men of color. In addition, I ask commissioners to direct staff to create a revised Boys & Young Men of Color (BYMOC) Local Action Plan for Durham County by a cross section of stakeholders to improve coordination, strengthen collaboration & shared responsibility, and systemic reforms with clear goals, measurable outcomes and timeframe to inform the collective impact strategy in partnership with the City of Durham.

We want BYMOC to thrive not just survive.

The Charles Hamilton Houston Foundation, Inc. will continue to work tirelessly to ensure boys and young men of color in our Young Men of Excellence Program and Career Pathway Program gain the skills, experiences, and support that will empower them to reach their potential through education and training to achieve career success and economic stability and mobility.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the administration.