

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF FULTON COUNTY

FULTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER

141 PRYOR STREET SW, SUITE 10032

ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303

Robert L. (Robb) Pitts
CHAIRMAN

TELEPHONE 404-613-2330
robb.pitts@fultoncountyga.gov



October 5, 2022

The Honorable Jim Gilvin
The Honorable Tom Reed
The Honorable Deana Holiday Ingraham
The Honorable Alan Hallman
The Honorable Peyton Jamison
The Honorable J. Clark Boddie
The Honorable Rusty Paul
The Honorable Vince Williams

The Honorable Andre Dickens
The Honorable Bianca Motley Broom
The Honorable Mario B. Avery
The Honorable John Bradberry
The Honorable Jim Still, Jr.
The Honorable Kurt Wilson
The Honorable Khalid Kamau

Dear Mayors:

Thank you for your participation in our first mediation session. I look forward to our next mediation session this Friday, October 7.

As you contemplate your counter proposal to the County, I wanted to reiterate some of the specific critical needs that Fulton County will face during the upcoming decade.

Health Crisis

- Increased costs to support Grady Hospital, worsened by the upcoming closure of Atlanta Medical Center and South Fulton Medical Center. Prior to the announcement of these closures, Grady requested \$40 million in additional funding due to increased costs. Fulton County's 2022 allocation to Grady is \$63.9 million, plus an additional \$11 million supplemental payment.
- Behavioral Health Crisis Center operations. Fulton County Medical Examiner reported increases of 20% in suicide deaths and 61% in drug-related deaths from 2017 to 2021. Fulton County is one of the few metro counties without a BHCC today and this is an urgent need to serve our residents.

Public Safety Crisis

- Increased costs for court operations, stemming from both increased population and increased crime rates. Costs are projected to rise by \$25 million in 2025 after the end of current federal funding support.

- Increased costs for jail services. The detainee population increased by 41% in two years, driven in large part by increased crime and arrests by city police departments. The Jail is over capacity and the cost for leased bed space is \$28 million per year for the Cobb County Jail and Atlanta City Detention Center. Longer term, costs to address jail facility needs are estimated between \$500 million to \$1.2 billion.
- Increased costs for Sheriff operations, including officer retention and hiring. The estimated cost is \$34 million in 2023. Sheriff's deputies and detention officers play a critical public safety role by staffing the jail, serving warrants, securing the courthouse, and other public safety support.

Other Needs

- The Fulton County Animal Shelter is beyond its useful life and must be replaced. The cost for the new facility will be \$41 million. Annual operating costs are projected at \$4 million.
- Funding requirements for the Fulton County pension fund are growing. The General Fund obligation is \$62.5 Million. This plan, which froze in 1999, supports retired employees, including those who served areas that are now cities.

In addition to these growing needs, without additional funding, the following plans for expanded services may need to be curtailed or further delayed:

- Construction of two new multipurpose senior centers (one in North Fulton in Alpharetta and one in South Fulton). Fulton County's last senior center was built in 1999.
- Construction of two new training centers for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (one in North Fulton and one in South Fulton).
- Operation and staffing for the Alpharetta detention facility.
- Suspension of current \$1.6 million in supplements to DFCS, to help attract and retain employees supporting foster care in Fulton County.
- Suspension of \$1.8 million in supplemental funding to provide behavioral health therapy for students in all Fulton County schools.

As you consider your next steps, thank you for prioritizing the needs of the 1.2 million citizens who rely on Fulton County services, and as many as 1 million visitors, students, and workers. As you already know, these include many of our most vulnerable residents – seniors, foster children, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, people with mental health issues and the families that support them, residents who depend on Grady Health System for critical care, detention officers who work in dangerous conditions, and others.

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The Board of Commissioners is fully committed to reaching a solution that is in the best interests of all Fulton County taxpayers, who we all represent.

I look forward to what I hope is a productive mediation session on October 7.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long horizontal stroke with a downward-pointing tail on the left side.

Robert L. Pitts, Chairman
Fulton County Board of Commissioners