

Commonwealth of Virginia

COUNTY OF FAIRFAX

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5/4/21

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COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY STEVE DESCANO COMMENDS PASSAGE OF FY 2022 BUDGET BY FAIRFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

FY 2022 budget includes additional positions for the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney, which will allow office to expand caseload to encompass all cases except for minor traffic matters

(Fairfax County, VA) – Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano issued the following statement regarding the passage of Fairfax County's FY 2022 budget:

"The Board of Supervisors' passage of Fairfax County's FY 2022 budget constitutes an important first step toward solving our community's longstanding justice crisis. Our County's budget is a reflection of our community's values and this budget clearly reflects a commitment to building a fair and just legal system in Fairfax County.

When I first brought the structural problems afflicting this system to the community's attention, I did so knowing it would confound some, surprise many, and concern all. However, I also knew that our Board of Supervisors would join me in not shying away from fixing a complex problem. This budget constitutes the first installment of a multi-year investment that County leaders worked collaboratively with my team to develop and addresses the chronic shortcomings that plagued our system. For too long, our justice system was structured around simply producing as many convictions as quickly as possible for as little money as possible. Corners were cut, public trust was compromised, and lives were damaged. I am grateful to Board Chairman McKay, Public Safety Committee Chairman Lusk, their colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, and County Executive Hill for recognizing that Fairfax County must do better and taking this first step toward investing in a more just system.

I have always maintained that our community is best served when our office brings our reform-minded approach to as many cases as possible. My team will now be able to expand our caseload to encompass all cases, except for minor traffic matters. We plan to pair this expanded caseload with our office's growing use of diversion and alternative sentencing to ensure we are keeping the community safe in a manner that accords with our values.

Finally, I want to thank the Board of Supervisors for increasing funding for the Office of the Public Defender. I have always believed that adequately funding public defense is vital if we are to ensure that no community member's income, zip code, or race dictates their treatment in our courthouse. With this budget, our County's leadership is sending a strong message that we are determined to make Fairfax County a national leader in building a more fair and just legal system. I look forward to continuing to work with the Board of Supervisors and stakeholders across the community to make this vision a reality. I am also committed to continuing to work with the Board of Supervisors to advocate in the General Assembly for a more just and sustainable funding model for the Commonwealth's criminal justice system. For too long Virginia has pursued criminal justice on the cheap and forced localities to either foot the bill or accept a substandard system that cuts corners. That's why in the years ahead, I will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with other County leaders as we demand solutions from Richmond."

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