



April 28, 2021

Mayor Kate Gallego
City of Phoenix

RE: 2021-2022 Trial Budget

Dear Mayor Gallego and Members of the Phoenix City Council:

On behalf of Vitalyst Health Foundation, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the City of Phoenix’s Trial Budget for 2021-2022. Vitalyst Health Foundation commends the City of Phoenix team for the work they have already undertaken to improve its response to the health needs of the City and we are clearly in support of the proposed budget additions. We also know that for this work to be effective, the City must work collaboratively with partners across the region.

Public Safety Reform & Responsiveness:

Arizona fire departments have been leading the way for over a decade in reimagining the emergency medical services (EMS) system through mobile integrated healthcare and community paramedicine. With health insurance payment transformation at the state and federal level¹, EMS providing fire departments are well positioned to house first response models for individuals in need of mental and behavioral health services. Over the last two years, Phoenix has researched multiple models from across the country, adopted crisis intervention and de-escalation training models for first responders, and implemented several pilot co-responder models. These alternative response models are successful in helping people connect to needed resources and reducing negative interactions with sworn personnel. Additionally, multiple City departments and community partners (including Vitalyst) continue to engage in learning collaboratives to further our understanding of alternative emergency response models and reimagining public safety with a focus on health.

Now is the time for the City to invest in a permanent alternative response model. The multi-year commitment to significantly increase resources of **\$15M and 130.9 positions** to expand the successful civilian program in the Phoenix Fire Department, the Community Advocacy Program (CAP), is a strong next step. This investment has the potential to provide improved crisis response and connection to the right medical and/or behavioral health care for City residents, while reducing response times for both the CAP teams and public safety calls for service. Ultimately, with continued



¹ AZDHS Treat & Refer Recognition Program: <https://azdhs.gov/preparedness/emergency-medical-services-trauma-system/index.php#tr-ems-agency-recognition>. CMS ET3 Model <https://innovation.cms.gov/innovation-models/et3>

collaboration and coordinated efforts across automatic aid cities, these types of alternative response models will better meet the demands of our residents, improve health outcomes, and build public safety trust with the community.

Climate Change & Heat Readiness - Office of Environmental Programs:

The work of improving well-being requires us to recognize all the elements of a healthy community and then collaborate on more equitable, comprehensive approaches to the opportunities and challenges we face. Environmental quality, healthy, affordable food, and quality, safe parks and recreation spaces are the foundation for a community's ability to be healthy.

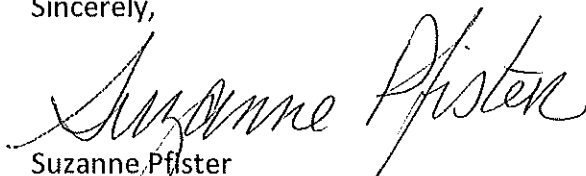
Vitalyst supports the \$200,000 budget request for the Climate & Air Quality Programs. This funding will support conducting greenhouse gas emissions inventories, assist with implementing the City's Climate Action Plan, and provide modeling and analysis regarding air quality. This funding is integral to creating a sustainable environment that is critical for the continued development of a resilient food system that can adapt to rising temperatures and drought conditions. This will also contribute to a healthy environment and a healthy community.

In addition, we support the \$475,000 budget request for a new Office of Heat Response and Mitigation to provide additional resources and staff to achieve the goals of the 2010 Tree and Shade Master Plan. This will support the development of a cohesive strategy and action plan to address the growing hazard of urban heat, which threatens the City's economic viability and health and well-being of its vulnerable residents.

We also support the \$300,000 budget request for the Office of Environmental Programs. This funding will add a Food Program Manager and funding to continue the Emergency Food Assistance Program which will help achieve the goals of the Council approved 2025 Phoenix Food Action Plan. This funding is needed and will significantly contribute to the achievement of the goals outlined in the plan.

Please contact me at 602.385.6500 or at SPfister@VitalystHealth.org if you have any questions. We look forward to continuing to work with the City of Phoenix to improve the health of all Phoenicians.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Pfister
President & CEO
Vitalyst Health Foundation