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**Statement of the AHS Board of Directors
On the Referendum to Activate a Housing Authority in Arlington**

This November Arlington voters will be asked to vote on a referendum to activate a Housing Authority in Arlington.

For reasons explained below, the Alliance for Housing Solutions (AHS) Board of Directors recommends a “no” vote on the referendum.

In making this recommendation, AHS stresses a no vote is not a vote against expanding efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing in the County.

To the contrary, AHS strongly supports 1) increased federal, state, and local government and private sector funding for affordable housing preservation and construction, 2) exploring ways that might encourage owners of market rate affordable units to keep the units affordable, and 3) exploring ways to streamline Arlington’s costly site-plan review process while protecting the opportunities for meaningful input from County commissions and citizens.

In reaching its position, the AHS Board asked four questions to evaluate the proposal to create a Housing Authority in Arlington:

- Would a Housing Authority generate more funds for affordable housing?
- Would a Housing Authority bring new effective tools to efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing?
- Would a Housing Authority increase the efficiency of the planning and approval processes and the use of available money?
- Would creation of a Housing Authority increase public support for affordable housing in Arlington?

AHS concluded that the answers to the first three questions are “no”. The answer to the fourth question was “not necessarily, with a possibility of lessening public support for affordable housing programs.”

A Housing Authority would not generate any new source of money for affordable housing that is not currently available to the County and developers or owners of committed affordable units. The County has used bond issues in the

past to support affordable housing developments, and can do so in the future. There has been no federal funding for new housing authorities since 1994. That means a new authority would need funds from the County and/or County-approved bond issues. Bond issues to fund an Authority would be subject to the same constraints as any other proposed bond issue.

A Housing Authority would bring no new effective tools to the affordable housing effort. For example, just as is the case with the County and private developers of affordable housing units, an Authority would have to pay market rate prices for any property. Or, an Authority would have to go through the same process as the County to acquire land through eminent domain.

On the question of efficiency, County money would be required to launch an authority and hire staff at least in the early years of operations, money that would not be available for affordable housing preservation or construction. There is no reason to believe that an Authority could acquire or manage rental properties any more efficiently or effectively than for-profit or non-profit firms do today. Any non by-right project proposed by the Authority would have to go through the same site plan process that exists for any such project. And an Authority would just be another applicant competing for public funds available for affordable housing developments.

Finally, given that the Board of Directors of an Authority would be appointed by the County Board, and that the Authority staff also might work for the County, as in Fairfax County, it is not self evident that an Authority would be an effective, independent voice for affordable housing policies.

In summary, creation of a Housing Authority would bring no new sources of funding or tools to affordable housing programs, would create additional bureaucracy and costs to no particular benefit, and would divert attention from efforts to secure the additional funding and new tools needed to more effectively address the shortage of affordable housing in Arlington.