



Community Action Agency of Somerville

CAAS helps local families and individuals achieve financial security while working to eliminate the root causes of economic injustice.

February 9, 2023

Katjana Ballantyne, Mayor, City of Somerville  
Ben Ewen-Campen, President, Somerville City Council  
93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Mayor Ballantyne and Councillor Ewen-Campen:

On behalf of Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS), I write to express CAAS' strong support for the Medical Debt Cancellation proposal submitted by Councillors Burnley Jr. and Kelly. CAAS believes that this is a wise and appropriate use of ARPA funding and will have a measurable impact on the low-income residents of our city.

As you know, CAAS has served low-income residents of Somerville as the City's federally designated anti-poverty agency since 1981. Through our work, we have developed strong and trusting relationships with Somerville's diverse low-income populations and a deep concern for their wellbeing and security.

The pandemic has had devastating and ongoing consequences for our low-income neighbors. We work daily with households struggling to make ends meet. Every dollar of debt that is relieved is a dollar that they can put toward basic necessities such as food, clothing, rent, and similar costs. We urge you to make an immediate commitment to the proposal which was approved on January 12th by the City Council, and to take all necessary steps to expedite the approval of these funds so as to provide this most urgently needed relief at the earliest possible opportunity. These funds should be allocated with delay, treating this as the emergency that it truly is.

Somerville residents who are not burdened by medical debt will be better able to achieve financial security. For this reason, CAAS strongly supports this proposal.

Sincerely,

J. David Gibbs  
Executive Director