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## **Washtenaw County Selected to Provide Financial Counseling as Free Public Service for Low-Income Residents**

**October 16, 2019** – At a network-wide training today in New York City, the County of Washtenaw, and the national [Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund](#) (CFE Fund) announced their selection to receive funding and technical support to assess implementation of proven financial empowerment programming in Washtenaw County. Washtenaw County will receive support to evaluate bringing free, professional, one-on-one financial counseling as a public service to residents, which will be administered by the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development. More than two dozen local governments across the country are working to replicate this proven model.

“Washtenaw County is committed to addressing income inequality and economic challenges for all of our residents”, said Gregory Dill, Washtenaw County Administrator, “Financial counseling that will help residents reduce debt and build their credit and savings would be another great tool to help us address these larger systemic issues. Washtenaw County is pleased to have the support of Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund through this planning grant.”

The CFE Fund, with support from seed funder Bloomberg Philanthropies, as well as Capital One, The JPB Foundation, JPMorgan Chase, and Wells Fargo, is working to expand the [Financial Empowerment Center](#) (FEC) model to local governments across the country. The CFE Fund provides grant support, intensive technical assistance, and a vibrant national learning community to help local government partners plan, launch, and sustain FECs for their residents.

Washtenaw County is one of six localities just selected to receive a grant and intensive technical assistance to prepare to launch a local FEC through the national *FEC Public* platform, which promotes scale and sustainability for the growing movement of professional, one-on-one financial counseling as a free public service. First piloted in New York City under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in 2008, the FECs have worked with over 98,000 clients, helping them reduce individual debt by over \$137 million, and increasing their families’ savings by over to \$19 million. A [CFE Fund evaluation](#) showed



that this program works even for residents with very low incomes and other complex financial challenges.

Washtenaw County joins Gaithersburg, MD; Paterson, NJ; Racine, WI; Richmond, VA; and Tulsa, OK; in receiving this grant award. This new cohort joins 26 other local governments already working to offer FEC services.

“Financially strong residents mean a financially strong city,” said **Jonathan Mintz, President and CEO of the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund**, “Increasingly, leaders across the country are turning to professional, high-quality financial counseling as a critical tool to build residents’ financial stability. The CFE Fund is thrilled to partner with Gregory Dill and the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development to work towards providing Financial Empowerment Center counseling for all Washtenaw residents, helping them build stronger financial futures.”

Financial Empowerment Centers (FECs) offer professional, one-on-one financial counseling as a free public service. At the Financial Empowerment Centers, professionally trained FEC counselors help individuals and families with low and moderate incomes manage their finances, pay down debt, increase savings, establish and build credit, and access safe and affordable mainstream banking products. At the core of the FEC model is the integration of counseling into other social services, including housing and foreclosure prevention, workforce development, prisoner reentry, benefits access, domestic violence services, and more.

**The Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund)** supports municipal efforts to improve the financial stability of households by leveraging opportunities unique to local government. By translating cutting edge experience with large scale programs, research, and policy in cities of all sizes, the CFE Fund assists mayors and other local leaders in over 80 cities to identify, develop, fund, implement, and research pilots and programs that help families build assets and make the most of their financial resources. For more information, please visit [www.cfefund.org](http://www.cfefund.org) or follow us on Twitter at @CFEFund.

**Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED)** is a government agency committed to stepping out of traditional government roles to drive long-term system changes that increase equity and opportunity for all residents. For more information, please visit [www.washtenaw.org/oced](http://www.washtenaw.org/oced) or follow us on Twitter at @washtenawOCED.