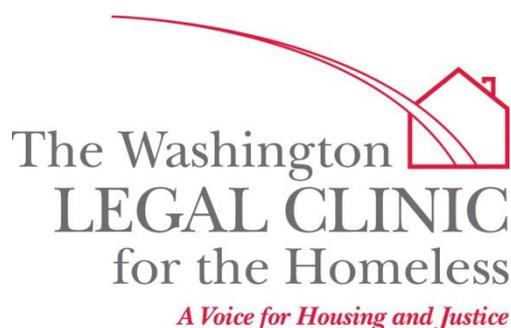


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**Testimony before the DC Council Committee on Human Services
Public Hearing on Bill 20-897, the “Plan for Comprehensive Services for Homeless
Individuals at 425 2nd Street, N.W. Amendment Act of 2014”
Presented by Patricia Mullahy Fugere
October 2, 2014**

Good morning, Chairman Graham and members of the Committee. My name is Patricia Mullahy Fugere. Since 1991, I have served as the executive director of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. As I believe you know, the Legal Clinic envisions – and since 1987 has worked towards – a just and inclusive community for *all* residents of the District of Columbia, where housing is a human right and where every individual and family has equal access to the resources they need to thrive. My own personal history with the Federal City Shelter (FCS) stretches back to its founding, when as a law student in 1983 and 1984, I worked with an attorney who helped the Community for Creative Non-Violence secure the property to run as a place of hospitality for our neighbors who are homeless.

I am pleased to come before you today to testify before Bill 20-897 and to thank you for your leadership in forming the CCNV Task Force that developed the statement of principles that you seek to incorporate into the Homeless Services Reform Act. As a member of the Task Force’s Community Engagement Committee, I had the privilege of participating in several listening sessions held at residential programs at Federal City Shelter, to hear from residents about their needs and desires, not only for the future of 425 Second Street, but for their own future. These sessions were held at each of the programs (CCNV, Open Door, John L. Young and Clean & Sober Streets), and each was followed by time for the participants to fill out a written survey seeking input on issues such as location, housing-type and support services that should be incorporated into any redevelopment of the property. We received 34 survey responses from John L. Young; 46 from Open Door; 35 from Clean & Sober Streets; and 50 from CCNV. I am happy to provide the Committee with a copy of the survey results by site.

At a public meeting of the Task Force at which these survey results were discussed, it was rightly pointed out that the total number of responses – 165 – represents a small portion of the total residents. It was not for lack of effort. Our Community Engagement Committee faced some logistical barriers in gaining access to the residents of CCNV, as the space that was offered was often in use as hypothermia overflow shelter.

We did find consistency in responses across programs, and I suspect if we'd been able to secure a significantly greater number of survey responses from CCNV residents, the answers would be similar. In a broad stroke summary, residents thought that the downtown location was important, they prioritized affordable permanent housing – with social service supports if necessary, they lifted up the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities, and they felt it was important, even if every resident of FCS was housed, to have some shelter capacity to respond to the needs of those who come after them.

The Task Force's SPACE Committee (Strategic Planning and Community Engagement), took the survey results, and combining that with other information the Task Force had received, including demographic information about each of the residential programs, developed the Statement of Principles that you now seek to incorporate into the HSRA. We agree that we should find some way to make these principles binding on a new Administration and new Council. However, we did not draft the principles with the idea that they would become statutory language. We'd like to have the opportunity to work with the committee prior to a mark-up of the bill to tighten the language, ensure its consistency with HSRA as appropriate (including adding definitions if necessary), incorporate a mandate that the Council have review and approval authority for any redevelopment plan for the property, and incorporate enforceability language to clarify that this is a mandatory, not precatory, provision. We would also like to clearly spell out what is an underlying premise of the statement of principles but which is not explicitly stated, that is, the principle of one-for-one replacement. We believe that term would strengthen the principles.

Finally, we recommend (and would be glad to work with the committee on the specifics) that a provision be added to establish some mechanism through which private funding available now could be set-aside in a trust or other instrument, specifically for the purposes of building deeply affordable housing on the site. As developers of adjacent parcels seek to fulfill their affordable housing obligation, we believe there are ways to creatively use those private dollars in a manner consistent with the statement of principles, to better serve Federal City Shelter residents.

In closing, Chairman Graham, as this is likely my final time testifying before you, I would like to thank you for your leadership over the years. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to collaborate with you to forge a more just and inclusive community.