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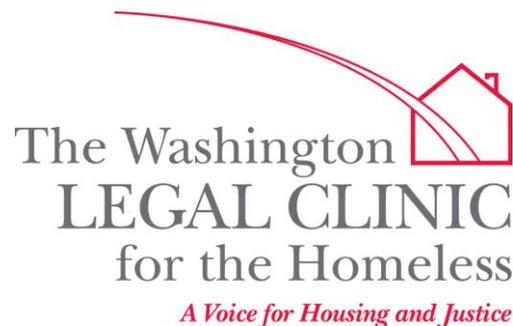
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Testimony before the DC Council Committee on Housing and Community Development Budget Hearing on the DC Housing Authority Presented by Max Tipping April 21, 2016

Good morning Councilmember Bonds and members of the Housing and Community Development Committee. My name is Max Tipping and I am an Equal Justice Works fellow at the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. 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. The Legal Clinic is also a member of the DC Fair Budget Coalition, and we strongly support the Fair Budget platform.

My testimony today will focus on the need to increase investments in affordable housing and fill the gaps in the second year of the Homeward DC plan. This includes:

- \$6.8 million to support 555 individuals with Targeted Affordable Housing
- \$4 million to support 204 families with Targeted Affordable Housing
- \$5 million for tenant-based LRSP vouchers for families on the DCHA waitlist
- \$3.6 million for project- and sponsor-based LRSP subsidies
- \$20 million annually for repairs to public housing

Without these funds in the FY17 budget, DC will not meet its goal of ending homelessness by 2020.

The DC Consortium of Legal Services Providers recently released a report on its Community Listening Project. The Project was a three-and-a-half year effort to hear directly from low-income community members about their most significant needs and challenges. Nearly 600 low-income DC residents were surveyed and 130 community members participated in focus groups. Lack of adequate, affordable housing and fear of homelessness emerged as the dominant concern among survey participants. More than one-third considered problems related to housing to be the most serious problems they had experienced in the past 2 years, and when asked to identify the kind of help that people in their community most need, almost 40% of the survey participants said “housing.” Only 30% of those surveyed were homeless,



but close to 60% expressed a fear of becoming homeless. The report can be found at: <http://www.lawhelp.org/dc/resource/community-listening-project>.

One of the most effective ways to address the community-identified need for permanent, affordable housing is to provide additional funding for tenant-based LRSP vouchers for families on the DCHA waitlist. The Mayor's budget does not include any new funding for such vouchers. There are currently 41,000 households on the DCHA waitlist, roughly 20,000 of which are homeless. DC needs tenant vouchers that go to homeless families on the waiting list to move families out of shelter and prevent families from entering expensive emergency shelters to begin with (\$50,000 per year versus \$15,000 per year for a voucher). It is also critical that shelter not become the only door to affordable housing in DC. The Legal Clinic supports the Fair Budget Coalition's recommendation of at least an additional \$5 million in tenant-based LRSP vouchers to end homelessness for 333 families on the DCHA waiting list.

For those individuals and families that have already entered the shelter system, there is a substantial need for additional funding for the Targeted Affordable Housing program (TAH). TAH connects individuals and families in the District's rapid re-housing program with long-term housing vouchers if they are unable to maintain their housing at the end of the rapid re-housing subsidy period. TAH can also be used to free up space in the District's Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) program by allowing individuals and families to "step down" to a TAH voucher if they no longer need the intensive services offered by PSH. For this year, the Homeward DC plan calls for funding 204 TAH vouchers for families and 555 for individuals, but the Mayor's budget only includes funding for 100 families and 100 individuals. This gap in funding will result in families and individuals returning to homelessness after their rapid re-housing subsidy ends. For example, I recently spoke with one family that is not going to be extended in rapid re-housing despite the fact that their income is only \$480 per month. They have no idea how they will be able to afford the \$1000 in monthly rent for the unit, and their landlord is already talking about filing for eviction. Their situation is not unique. In fact, based on the District's own figures, we can expect at least half of the 1,300 families in rapid re-housing to be unable to maintain their housing independently after the subsidy ends. If these families are not connected to TAH, they will not be able to afford their rent and will likely return to homelessness. Given the pressing need among many rapid re-housing participants for long-term housing assistance, the Legal Clinic supports at the very least filling the gaps in the Homeward DC plan by providing \$6.8 million to support 555 individuals with TAH and \$4 million to support 204 families with TAH.

Finally, I would like to briefly note the need for additional funding for project- and sponsor-based LRSP as well as funding for public housing repairs. The Legal Clinic supports the Fair Budget Coalition's call for \$3.6 million for project- and sponsor-based LRSP, which is a critical means of developing affordable housing resources for extremely low income households. The Legal Clinic also supports the Fair Budget Coalition recommendation of a \$20 million annual commitment to a Public Housing Repair Fund, which would be crucial to both increasing and improving the District's affordable housing stock.

We need a budget that will adequately address our city's homelessness crisis, and I would strongly encourage this committee to find the funding necessary to meet the Fair Budget Coalition's recommendations as outlined above.