

October 20, 2022

DC Council members,

We, the undersigned organizations, join together to support the quick passage and funding of the Rapid Re-Housing Reform Amendment Act of 2022 (the Act). After many years of rapid re-housing participants raising concerns about the program, we are pleased to see some significant reform enshrined in the proposed law.

While we support the entire bill, we are particularly supportive of these critical components of the bill:

1. The end of an arbitrary time limit for housing support.

The Act finally brings an end to the much-maligned arbitrary time limit imposed by rapid re-housing. The lack of affordable housing in the District of Columbia is a structural, systemic problem with deep roots that demands comprehensive and sustained solutions. Cutting DC residents from rental assistance because they hit a time limit- even when they cannot afford market rent on their own- is unfair, unjust, and will lead to increased evictions and homelessness. This, of course, disproportionately harms Black residents and other communities of color. The Department of Human Services has shared data that 97% of families terminated for a time limit cannot afford rent without further assistance! The Act formally implements a key recommendation from the FRSP Task Force—that rapid re-housing work as a bridge program to long-term subsidies for those who are eligible.

2. The movement to a voluntary services model.

DC has, for years, had a Housing First service delivery model for all of its locally funded housing programs, where services are voluntary and housing support is not contingent on participation in case management. National best practices call for rapid re-housing to follow this Housing First model. Unfortunately, for years rapid re-housing has been the outlier in DC's housing programs, utilizing a mandatory services model. The Act requires rapid re-housing to move to a voluntary services model.

3. The requirement that rent be no more than 30% of a participant's income.

The Act ensures that rent is affordable to participants in rapid re-housing by limiting the rental burden to 30% of income—the same rent as every other affordable housing program. Currently, participants pay between 40-60% of their income for rent. Not only are those rents considered unaffordable by federal guidelines, but different households bear different rent burdens, causing the Inspector General to cite the Department of Human Services for seemingly arbitrary rent determinations.

4. Increased transparency and accountability for permanent housing program eligibility.

The Act requires assessments of and eligibility determinations for participants for Targeted Affordable Housing (TAH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) within six months of entry and within three months of proposed exit. Often, participants are not

aware that these programs exist, are not consistently assessed for these programs, and do not receive lawful eligibility notices explaining why they are or are not eligible for these programs.

Thank you for your hard work to ensure that rapid re-housing is reformed and participants have increased housing stability.

Sincerely,

1. Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
2. Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project
3. Autistic People of Color Fund
4. Autistic Women and Nonbinary Network
5. Beloved Community Incubator
6. Marta Beresin, Deputy Director, Health Justice Alliance, Georgetown University Law Center
7. Black Swan Academy
8. Bread for the City
9. Cancel Rent DC
10. Yael Cannon, Associate Professor of Law and Director, Georgetown University Health Justice Alliance Law Clinic
11. Children's Law Center
12. Coalition for Environmentally Safe Communities
13. DC Action
14. DC Bar Pro Bono Center
15. DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
16. DC for Democracy
17. DC Kincare Alliance
18. DC Statehood Green Party
19. DC Tenants Rights Center
20. District Alliance for Safe Housing, Inc
21. Equal Rights Center
22. Empower DC
23. Fair Budget Coalition
24. First Shift Justice Project
25. Friendship Place
26. Greater DC Diaper Bank
27. Homeless Children's Playtime Project
28. Jews United for Justice
29. Justice and Witness Action Network DC team for The UCC Potomac Association
30. Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
31. Legal Counsel for the Elderly
32. Lincoln Congregational Temple UCC

33. Many Languages One Voice (MLOV)
34. Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid Network
35. Mother's Outreach Network
36. National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
37. National Coalition for the Homeless
38. One DC
39. Pathways to Housing DC
40. Platform of Hope
41. Plymouth Congregational UCC Board of Social Action
42. Positive Force DC
43. Rebuilding the Community
44. Rising for Justice
45. Rising Voices Politics
46. Sunrise DC
47. TENAC (DC Tenants' Advocacy Coalition)
48. Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs
49. Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless
50. We Are Family Senior Outreach Network
51. Yachad