



D.C. Council Committee on Housing-DCHA Budget Oversight Hearing- April 11, 2024

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Since 1987 the Legal Clinic 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 have equal access to the resources that they need to thrive.

For decades, D.C. public housing residents have had to endure deplorable and dangerous conditions despite their longstanding advocacy for change. For several years, D.C. Housing Authority considered and is now executing plans for a large-scale public housing demolition and renovations for many of its properties. The new Executive Director has promised to release his administration's "Recovery Plan" in May. We look forward to this administration's layout of concerns and proposals to improve and preserve the affordable housing stock, including addressing the 1,878 units pending abatement, the more than 15,000 open work orders, and the redevelopment or replacement of thousands of units.

Last year, the Mayor made a significant investment towards DCHA's transformation. We are pleased to see that the Mayor has demonstrated a continued commitment to the rehabilitation process with the approximate \$50 million investment included in FY 2025 proposed budget. We, along with our Fair Budget Coalition, ask the Council for a recurring \$60 million commitment to DCHA's renovation and rehabilitation process. However, the Council and DCHA have acknowledged that the agency needs to dramatically improve operations, its delivery of services

and develop accountability mechanisms for the benefit of its residents. The Council should require DCHA to issue a quarterly report that demonstrates how these funds are utilized and how the funds result in positive outcomes for residents and to DCHA properties.

D.C.'s affordable housing crisis continues to worsen. Last year, there was no mayoral investment for housing vouchers. The Council's investment for housing vouchers was minimal and only for permanent affordable housing vouchers. FY25's proposed budget, again, does not include funds for any D.C. tenant-voucher program, leaving the thousands of homeless individuals and families without housing options. Unsurprisingly, recent data indicates homelessness has increased by twelve percent (12%) in 2023 and [1 in 10 D.C.](#) residents are housing insecure. These grim statistics overwhelmingly impact D.C.'s children; an [estimated 1 in 5](#) experiences chronic housing instability. A significant budgetary investment into all forms of permanent housing vouchers—LRSP tenant vouchers, PSH, and TAH-- is fundamental to overcoming the threat of homelessness for so many. Housing voucher variety in D.C. is critical, and residents need voucher availability through LRSP tenant vouchers directly from DCHA *and* DHS-based vouchers. Additionally, DCHA must aggressively lower its vacancy rate in its public housing properties. Aggressive Council oversight is needed to ensure that DHS and DCHA effectively connect homeless individuals and families to their vouchers and improve voucher utilization so that homelessness truly *is* rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Now that DCHA has a new Executive Director and General Counsel, DCHA residents and advocates look forward to a more collaborative and transparent Housing Authority. However, to develop into the agency that D.C. residents truly deserve, the agency must have an independent Board of Commissioners with voting resident members. D.C. Council must create a thoughtful framework to meet this necessary step once the current Stabilization and Reform Board expires.

Apartments.com reports that D.C. rents are [48% higher](#) than the national average and the U.S. Marshall Service reports that eviction filings are up [250%](#). Now is not the time to abandon the families and individuals that struggle the most to afford and secure housing. We strongly urge the Council to invest in the City's housing voucher programs and to invest a recurring \$60 million for the rehabilitation and redevelopment of DCHA properties. The Council must implement strong oversight measures to improve voucher utilization, ensure the preservation of affordable units, memorialize the right to return, and encourage the productive operation of DCHA through transparent accountability measures. Additionally, we ask that the Council assess the Mayor's BSA proposal in [D.C. Official Code § 6-227, Subtitle \(II\)\(C\)](#) , the Local Rent Supplement Program Accounts Amendment Act of 2024, and its potential impact on the funding and operations of the DCHA and the creation of affordable housing in D.C.