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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

PUBLIC MEETING

4

BEFORE THE COMMITTEES ON LAW AND GOVERNMENT
and LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, November 18, 1997
10:45 a.m.

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RES. 970558 - Authorizing the Council's Committees
of Licenses and Inspections and Law and
Government to conduct an investigation into the
Section 8 Housing Program.

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13 PRESENT:

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COUNCILMAN DAVID COHEN, Chair,
Law and Government

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COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY, Chair,
Licenses and Inspections

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COUNCILMAN ANGEL L. ORTIZ
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILWOMAN HAPPY FERNANDEZ
COUNCILMAN RICHARD T. MARIANO
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
COUNCILWOMAN JOAN L. KRAJEWSKI
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCIO
COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO
COUNCILWOMAN ANNA C. VERNA
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: The joint Committee
3 of Law and Government and Licenses and Inspections
4 is called to order.

5 Notices were properly published.

6 There is a quorum present of both committees.

7 To my right is Councilwoman Joan
8 Krajewski. Next to her is Councilman Mariano;
9 Council Frank Rizzo; Council James Kenney, who is
10 chairman of Licenses and Inspections Committee, the
11 other Committee, together with Law and Government.

12 I am David Cohen, Chairman of the Law
13 and Government Committee.

14 To my immediate left is Councilman
15 Ortiz. To his left is Councilwoman Blackwell. To
16 her left is Councilman Nutter. And then
17 Councilwoman Tasco, Councilwoman Fernandez.

18 And Councilwoman Verna, the majority
19 leader of the Democratic Council, is in her seat, as
20 is Councilman Frank DiCicco.

21 We have far more than a majority of
22 City Council that are here today for this joint
23 meeting.

24 I am going to introduce Councilman
25 Kenney, who has a short statement to make.

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2 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very
3 much, Mr. Chairman.

4 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Just before you do,
5 where is the clerk of the Committee?

6 Wanda, would you read the title of
7 the resolution?

8 THE CLERK: Resolution No. 970558,
9 authorizing the Council's Committee on Licenses and
10 Inspections and Law and Government to conduct an
11 investigation into the Section 8 housing program,
12 its Administration, the condition of Section 8
13 residential properties, the responsibilities of
14 landlords to provide appropriate maintenance and
15 services for their tenants, and the overall effect
16 of this program on the quality of life for Section 8
17 tenants and their families.

18 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
19 much.

20 Councilman Kenney.

21 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very
22 much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you all for coming
23 here today.

24 I would like to open up today's
25 hearing with a brief statement.

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2 Over the past few months, and
3 especially during the last few weeks, there has been
4 a great deal of discussion about the federal Section
5 8 Housing Program. Some of this discussion has been
6 very informative and constructive, and some of it
7 has not.

8 Our purpose here today is to be as
9 constructive as possible. We are not here to trash
10 the Section 8 program or to gather testimony based
11 on emotion and misguided fears that will only
12 inflame the embers of an already simmering fire.

13 The Section 8 program has helped
14 thousands of American families in need since 1932,
15 and it should continue to do so.

16 But like any government program,
17 there are some problems. And we are here today to
18 listen to your suggestions and complaints about
19 these problems and, working with Mayor Rendell and
20 the Philadelphia Housing Authority, find workable
21 solutions to solve many of these problems.

22 Before this hearing starts, I want to
23 be perfectly clear about one thing. Some will come
24 before us giving testimony with ulterior motives in
25 mind.

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2 They may paint the Section 8 program
3 with a broad brush in an ugly attempt to polarize us
4 as a city and prevent people of lesser income from
5 living where they choose.

6 I will remind those individuals with
7 this intent that this type of activity is wrong and
8 blatantly illegal. And I, along with the other
9 members of this Committee, will not allow this
10 hearing to be used as a forum for any misguided
11 addenda that attempts to tear us apart, rather than
12 bring us together to find workable solutions to this
13 and many of our problems.

14 I thank you all for coming today and
15 for your attention and for your cooperation in
16 making sure that this hearing, some positive things
17 come out of it to help everyone involved.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you,
20 Councilman.

21 I am going to call on Councilman
22 Ortiz, who has been working very hard with
23 Councilman Kenney over a period of time on Section
24 8.

25 Councilman Ortiz.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 Over the last few months a debate has
5 started in this city that has attempted to blame all
6 of the ills that happen in a neighborhood on
7 residents and people who live in Section 8
8 programs.

9 Obviously the problems of a
10 neighborhood are much more complex, much more
11 extensive, and much more directed and caused by
12 other situations, rather than people who are in
13 Section 8.

14 Section 8 has been a program that has
15 worked, has worked in this nation for over 50 years,
16 since 1932.

17 We have had a program that has taken
18 people from being poor, and, through integrating
19 them into other neighborhoods, have allowed them to
20 integrate themselves into the middle class and been
21 able to formulate their families and lead a very,
22 very good life.

23 Today Section 8 is being used
24 wrongly. It is becoming a code word for things that
25 we thought we had transcended over decades of

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2 struggle for equality in this nation.

3 We need a program that can integrate
4 poor people into the mainstream of society. We have
5 tried to cluster people into segregated ghettos of
6 poverty and projects, and that has failed. Section
7 8 has worked.

8 Are there some bad tenants? Of
9 course there are bad tenants. Are there bad
10 landlords? Of course there are bad landlords.

11 Do we need to fix certain things so
12 that program works better? Of course there are
13 certain things that need to be done so that the
14 program works better.

15 That is what this hearing is all
16 about. This hearing is about what can we do, as we
17 listen to people, to make the program work better.

18 It is not to come in and try to
19 destroy or cast aspersions or make charges or claim
20 that a certain group of individuals cause problems
21 that they do not in fact cause; it is to work
22 towards a resolution and see where the problem
23 lies.

24 It is government that can fix it. It
25 is a government program that can work, because it

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2 addresses that seem to require attention, we would
3 prefer, instead of names and addressed being used at
4 this hearing, with perhaps charges that may later be
5 found to be unfounded or founded, require corrective
6 action, instead of giving their names out publicly
7 here, I am going to ask -- Wanda, would you stand.

8 Wanda is a staff member. We would
9 like at the end or during the course of the hearing,
10 please go over and give her the information, the
11 names of the people, the addresses, and a general
12 nature of the problems.

13 And the City Council will accept
14 responsibility for initiating the investigations
15 that are going to be needed to determine whether
16 corrective action is needed.

17 And if corrective action is needed,
18 we are going to work very hard to see that
19 correction takes place.

20 Go ahead, sir. Will you identify
21 yourself for the record? This will be for all
22 witnesses.

23 When you testify, begin by giving
24 your name and your organization, if you represent an
25 organization.

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2 And please, because while this room
3 looks a bit fancy and what they say ornate --
4 whatever ornate means -- the amplification system is
5 terrible.

6 And that means that for you to be
7 heard -- and we want everybody in the room to hear
8 all of the testimony -- you have to bring the
9 microphone as close to your mouth as is possible;
10 otherwise, you won't be heard. So we are urging
11 everyone.

12 The reason you are giving your name
13 is that the testimony is being recorded, and the
14 record has to show who is speaking at any given
15 time.

16 Thank you. Please proceed.

17 MR. KIRK BROWN: My name is Kirk
18 Brown. I live in the 400 block --

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: You are going to
20 have to bring your microphone much closer and speak
21 with some force.

22 MR. BROWN: My name is Kirk Brown. I
23 live in the 400 block of Dickinson Street.

24 And I would like to start off by
25 saying that on my block we have African-Americans,

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2 Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Asian-Americans,
3 Louisian immigrants, Polish immigrants, Cambodian
4 immigrants, Vietnamese immigrants, and Hispanics.

5 We have Muslims. We have Jews. We
6 have Christians and Buddhists.

7 We have lawyers, actors, house
8 painters, hat makers, retirees, business managers,
9 cooks, migrant field laborers, and others.

10 We have got dogs, cats, and birds;
11 athletes, invalids, and all points in between.

12 By now you should have an idea that
13 this is one of the most diverse blocks in
14 Philadelphia. It is a living example of what
15 Philadelphia means.

16 This is a street in the Pennsport
17 Dickinson Square area of South Philly, just between
18 the Italian Market and the riverfront. This is a
19 place where more movies have been shot than people.

20 This wondrous, strange assortment is
21 currently being tested by a government program that
22 was designed to do what so many communities refused
23 to do, integrate. This is Section 8.

24 This is a community ripe for the
25 failings of a misguided government subsidy that has

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2 will allow homeowners to reap windfalls from the
3 taxpayers' purse -- which, if I am not mistaken, is
4 empty -- through the Section 8 program.

5 For the slumlord it is an excellent
6 opportunity. For the misbegotten Section 8 tenant,
7 it is a delight to live in a property that is
8 partially paid for by the government.

9 And if your third or your fourth
10 isn't paid, the chances of eviction become slim
11 because there is no place left for you to go.

12 For the Section 8 tenant that plays
13 by the rules and hopes to maintain a clean and
14 comfortable home for his or her family with the
15 temporary assistance this program was designed to
16 offer, the schemers have siphoned all hope.

17 At the outset I mentioned how diverse
18 my block is. And I mentioned it because, lately, I
19 have seen tenants' rights groups play the race card
20 with respect to the Section 8 housing issue. They
21 ought to be ashamed of themselves for continuing
22 this sham.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. BROWN: The problem is, quite
25 simply, the unwillingness or the inability to

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2 Section 8 children and their courteous children
3 proof that, indeed, Section 8 has participants who
4 are model neighbors.

5 My neighbors and I have welcomed
6 everyone. It is only those residents who scream
7 profanities at the children, exceed occupancy
8 regulations, disturb the peace well beyond
9 respectable hours, and who continuously express
10 belligerent behavior towards others that are
11 responsible for part of this crisis.

12 Unfortunately, on our block this
13 describes a Section 8 tenant.

14 The balance of blame must go to the
15 unthinking bureaucrats -- none of them present --
16 and their patron slumlords.

17 Additional culpability rests with
18 communities that hold the power and clout to block
19 mixed-income housing, which has been an effective
20 means of easing the plight of the poor.

21 We need solutions, not studies;
22 understanding, not lip service. A centralized
23 grievance committee to effectively address the
24 bad-neighbor issues could go a long way towards
25 resolving the Section 8 problem. Because it is

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2 always the few who ruin it for the many.

3 With centralization, the problem
4 tenants could be identified, educated, and, if
5 necessary, eliminated from the program.

6 The 1-800 number would be a simple,
7 effective tool to follow the abusive patterns of the
8 few.

9 I thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Is there anyone else
12 from your group who is going to be speaking?

13 Because we would like to hold the
14 questions until everyone that's going to speak has
15 spoken.

16 MS. DOROTHY MOODY: My name is Dot.
17 I live right next to the Section 8.

18 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Excuse me, Dot.
19 You have to give your last name for the record.

20 MS. MOODY: Moody. I am not a moody
21 person, though.

22 But these people are very, very
23 belligerent.

24 Now, I had an argument with her a few
25 weeks ago. And the cop that came was a black cop.

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2 She is a black woman.

3 And he said to me, "It is going to
4 get worse for you, instead of getting better." And
5 it is getting worse for me.

6 They make fun of me walking, which I
7 have a spine problem, and they tried to hit me with
8 a car. So I know it is going to get worse in the
9 summertime.

10 But I don't know what else to do.

11 MS. FELICIA ADAMS: My name is
12 Felicia Adams. I am from 3rd and Dickinson; they
13 are 4th and Dickinson. So we are not in the same
14 block, but we are neighbors.

15 And just about everybody in the next
16 block, and attending their block meeting, I got to
17 meet Kirk here.

18 I feel I have to go after her. And I
19 feel like I have to go after Kirk. Because I think
20 I can speak for a lot of Section 8 tenants and
21 recipients who are good neighbors.

22 I am the block captain. And I am a
23 Section 8 tenant; I am not a homeowner. So it is
24 like how can a Section 8 tenant be a block captain
25 if she is not a homeowner?

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2 Well, I am a block captain because I
3 saw that a lot of things needed to be done on my
4 block.

5 And I went to the neighbors and I
6 knocked on their door one morning, and I said, "Get
7 up, get dressed, come out, sweep your block."

8 And a lot of the tenants --
9 (Applause.)

10 MS. ADAMS: A lot of the tenants got
11 up, came out, and swept the block.

12 And from there, we have had an
13 organized flea market. We are trying to organize
14 the 300 block and the 400 block. We are trying to
15 get the 500 block included, so that we can do things
16 together.

17 I have nothing but good things to say
18 about Section 8. I was in need; they helped me
19 out. And, in return -- not saying that this was
20 requested of me -- but I do my part of being a good
21 neighbor to those who could have rejected me, you
22 know, but they didn't. And they're helping me.

23 Like I said, I am the block captain.
24 I go around, inform the neighbors of, "This is the
25 day you put your trash out."

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2 got the owner's permission of that lot to clean it
3 up. He gave us permission. He said we could clean
4 it up; we cleaned it up. He said we can put flowers
5 on there; that's what we are going to do.

6 We want to put a mural up on the
7 wall. Since my landlord owns the property where the
8 wall is, I went to my landlord and I said, "This is
9 what we would like to do."

10 He says, "Felicia, do you mind that
11 mural being on your wall?" Now he says my wall,
12 because I am a tenant. He has a lot of respect for
13 me. He treats me respectfully, just like I treat
14 his property respectfully.

15 I said I didn't mind. He says,
16 "Well, then, do what you want." He says, "If you
17 need it in writing, just call me back up and I will
18 put it in writing."

19 Now, this is a good neighborhood,
20 working with a good tenant, who has an excellent
21 landlord, who takes care of his property.

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. ADAMS: All the problems people
24 are talking about, I don't know what you are talking
25 about.

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2 And I get really, really, really
3 upset and hyped when I hear -- like that
4 inflammatory article that was in Sunday's paper
5 pissed me off. I wanted to burn the paper.

6 And other inflammatory comments about
7 color and stuff, it just -- it angers me. It angers
8 me.

9 Now, the other Section 8 tenant in
10 the other block, I am new to hearing about this. I
11 wasn't aware of her.

12 And I said to them, what could we do
13 as a community? I don't think the answer is kicking
14 her out of our neighborhood. Because we could be
15 sending her to someone else.

16 I don't think the answer is
17 necessarily making it a bureaucratic, mandatory
18 issue or statement or idea that we have to go
19 through some kind of training.

20 Because I am a good resident. So why
21 do I have to go through training to be a good
22 resident?

23 But I think the answer is in the
24 landlord, the tenant, the community, and the
25 government all working together to make it a

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2 peaceful situation for everybody. That's how I
3 think. I could be wrong.

4 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
5 much.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You are not
8 wrong.

9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Give your name and
10 go right ahead.

11 MS. MARIA PEREZ: My name is Maria
12 Perez, and I live in the 400 block of Dickinson,
13 too. I am a Section 8 resident for over ten years.

14 And we are having problems in the
15 community with drugs, with housing, with
16 everything.

17 And I am not here to criticize
18 nobody. I am here to stand by those that believe in
19 the law, and they want to follow it.

20 I got a grandson that he is 5, and he
21 just went to school. Now, he is attending in the
22 same room, in the same school with these kids that
23 just moving in the block.

24 The kids come to my grandson and say,
25 "Because you Puerto Rican and we are other

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2 nationality, you have to move. We just moving in
3 the block. We are not getting out." And he is only
4 5.

5 He come to me and say, "Mom-mom, why
6 we have to move?"

7 I say, "No, we don't have to move.
8 We have to work together and work on these kids to
9 come into the neighborhood and be part of it."

10 The kids come and knock on my door
11 and ask to play with my grandson at the end of the
12 summer. I watch them. I let them play. I feed
13 them juice and cookies. And then the kids, they
14 don't want to be involved.

15 The kids say they just moving in the
16 block, we have to move. I don't see why tenants,
17 that we are living in the block for 10, 11, maybe
18 all life, like this lady here, we have to pack us up
19 and move and let them come and take over. I don't
20 think it is fair.

21 Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you. Anyone
23 else who is going to speak? Thank you.

24 Councilman Kenney.

25 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: No, sir.

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilman Nutter.

3 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Yes. Thank you,
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 The gentlemen who started the
6 testimony, I am sorry I didn't catch your name.

7 MR. BROWN: Kirk Brown, sir.

8 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Kirk Brown.

9 I get the impression from the
10 testimony and from some information that I have that
11 there are two Section 8 properties on the 400 block
12 of Dickinson; is that correct?

13 MR. BROWN: I have no idea how many
14 Section 8 properties are on the block, per se.
15 There are two that I know of, but there could be
16 more.

17 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Do you believe
18 that there are more?

19 MR. BROWN: Quite frankly, I don't
20 care that there are more.

21 And I only say that not because I
22 don't have an answer for you, but because I don't
23 care if a person is Section 8 or not Section 8, so I
24 don't make it an issue for me. It is behavior.

25 And if that behavior continues and is

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2 fostered by a Section 8 program the taxpayers cover,
3 then I think that I should feel comfortable coming
4 to City Council and hoping that there can be some
5 resolution.

6 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I appreciate
7 that. I am trying to understand, though, the start
8 of your testimony.

9 Did you seem to indicate in your
10 testimony that there were Section 8 participants who
11 were exhibiting some inappropriate behavior on your
12 block?

13 MR. BROWN: That's correct.

14 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. And what
15 do you do on your block if non-Section-8 people
16 exhibit the same behavior?

17 MR. BROWN: There would be an
18 approaching of the owner of the property, if they
19 themselves are the owner of the properties.

20 If it is direct belligerence, then it
21 is 911.

22 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And have you
23 taken those steps in this?

24 MR. BROWN: Several times.

25 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Did you get any

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2 resolution?

3 MR. BROWN: Some resolution.

4 The largest issues have been with the
5 children and the way we have observed their
6 treatment.

7 I understand that the organizations
8 that come to rescue kids like this, in the
9 situation, have been informed about it, but they
10 don't consider it their priority.

11 Apparently there are more serious
12 situations in the city that require their limited
13 attention.

14 So it is a tough nut to crack, I
15 know. But if, in fact, it is continuing repeatedly
16 because an owner, a property owner, is bringing in
17 tenants that exhibit the same behavior repeatedly,
18 then I think the problem may rest with the owner.

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: How many problem
20 properties do you believe you have on your block?

21 MR. BROWN: About three.

22 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And are either of
23 them the two folks that are at the table?

24 MR. BROWN: No. No. There are no
25 problem tenants here at the table.

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2 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: The reason I
3 asked the question is because the PHA records seem
4 to indicate that there are only two Section 8
5 properties in the 400 block of Dickinson Street.

6 And your testimony is that the two
7 people who occupy those properties are at the
8 witness table.

9 MR. BROWN: No, sir.

10 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I am sorry. The
11 person lives in the 300 block?

12 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Miss Perez, I
13 think?

14 MR. BROWN: Felicia Adams lives in
15 the 300. Ms. Perez lives in the 400.

16 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: The lady in the
17 blue, you live in the 300?

18 MR. FELDGUS: Yes.

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. I
20 apologize.

21 So it sounds like you may have some
22 Section 8 tenant problems, but it sounds like you
23 may have some non-Section-8 problems.

24 MR. BROWN: I should tell you,
25 Councilman, that there are a lot of times when you

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2 you think that there are, I guess, different rules
3 of behavior or there should be a different response
4 from the government based on the behavior of people,
5 determined by whether they are a participant in the
6 Section 8 program or not?

7 MR. BROWN: I personally think that
8 if a person is receiving this type of assistance
9 from the government, from the taxpayer, then they
10 should, at minimum, behave in accordance to
11 community standards.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And the people
14 who are not receiving the benefit, whatever it may
15 be -- there are various types of benefits --

16 MR. BROWN: Well, then I presume --

17 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Let me finish the
18 question.

19 If you are not receiving the benefit
20 from the government, then you can do whatever you
21 want to do?

22 MR. BROWN: I think you are saying if
23 you are not receiving subsidy from the government,
24 you can behave -- you have a license to be rude and
25 belligerent to your neighbors.

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2 At some point you have to say that
3 there may be some cultural issues about the way
4 people treat their neighbors, about the way they
5 treat their children, about the way they treat their
6 properties.

7 And if that stems from coming from an
8 environment where you do not have direct
9 responsibility for your property, then it shouldn't
10 be dismissed; that's what I'm saying.

11 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Just before
14 Councilwoman Fernandez, could you tell us what
15 government agencies you went to with respect to the
16 problems from the children?

17 MS. MOODY: I have called abusive
18 centers.

19 I have called the police. They came
20 down one night, and the kids were in the house by
21 themselves and they had locked the door. This
22 15-year-old was supposed to be watching them.

23 Now, they locked the door and they
24 were all the way down the street, this kid.

25 When the cops got there, they had to

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2 go find this child to get in the house with these
3 three little kids by themselves.

4 Now, suppose they would have turned
5 the gas on and started the fire? That would have
6 been my problem, too. I mean, this lady just don't
7 want to listen to anybody.

8 Now, the Section 8 investigator came
9 down to me last week, and we have been talking to
10 him.

11 He wants to find out, the guy that
12 lives with her has a car. And he wants to find out
13 the number of the license number. Because this guy
14 just got out of jail. We don't know what happened,
15 where it happened, what happened.

16 But this is the -- the man wants to
17 find out who the captain of our district is, so he
18 can get in touch with him.

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: May I just ask one
20 question?

21 MS. MOODY: But this has been going
22 on for over a year.

23 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Did you contact any
24 of the city agencies, like the Human Services
25 Department or the Health Department.

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2 MS. MOODY: Yes. I tried. But they
3 said it was no abuse. There is no abuse.

4 CHAIRMAN COHEN: That is an an area
5 that we would be --

6 MS. MOODY: She can talk to her
7 children the way she wants to talk to them. And
8 every word that comes out of her mouth is MF.

9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: All right. Thank
10 you.

11 Councilwoman Fernandez and
12 Councilwoman Krajewski.

13 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Thank you,
14 Councilman Cohen.

15 Mr. Brown, these are hearings where
16 you can help us understand both what the problem is
17 and then what might be some ways to resolve it.

18 And I am trying to separate out what
19 might need to be resolved on your particular block,
20 which would depend on all the facts on your
21 particular block.

22 And, you know, since it involves DHS,
23 the Child Abuse Unit, that might be a different
24 issue than Section 8 housing as it relates to HUD
25 and PHA, Philadelphia Housing Authority, that's

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2 need is so great and the waiting list so long, it
3 seems to me abusive that there are people in the
4 program who do not deserve it the way Felicia does.
5 And that's what I'm hoping can be the type of
6 change.

7 So if it means that the Section 8
8 community or the Section 8 organizers can say, this
9 is a program that is very limited, and we are only
10 going to bring, allow in, those who will behave by
11 community standards, then that to me is an
12 improvement.

13 So that you don't see the type of
14 nightmares that we have been witnessing, and you
15 don't have them in the types of communities that we
16 have been witnessing.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Do I hear
19 you saying you think there needs to be -- one would
20 be screening people before they come in?

21 MR. BROWN: Absolutely. And removing
22 them after there is a problem.

23 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: And the
24 second step would be removing someone who turns out
25 to be an irresponsible or destructive tenant once

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2 they were there?

3 MR. BROWN: Correct.

4 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Have you
5 taken any steps, do you know who to turn to, to
6 pursue that line of action in the case in your
7 neighborhood?

8 MR. BROWN: I am completely out of
9 the loop.

10 Because I thought Section 8 was a
11 federal program. But I am receiving some
12 information that the responsibilities have been
13 given to local authorities.

14 So I don't know if I should be
15 communicating with my Congressman, I don't know if I
16 should be communicating with my Councilman, or if we
17 should be communicating with our neighborhood
18 associations.

19 If all of them, at least on this
20 issue, can come together and say, that's the crux of
21 the matter, getting folks who are not behaving in
22 accordance to community standards off the line, so
23 that it creates an opportunity for someone that does
24 deserve, so that's what I'm hoping can be the
25 resolve.

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2 But I want to say that if we are, as
3 neighbors, trying to do the best that we can, and we
4 are the ones who have not run from the city,
5 especially when we have the opportunity to -- I
6 mean, some are so frustrated that they don't have a
7 choice.

8 My concern is that this is a house, a
9 particular problem house, is a house that has young
10 kids in it. Those young kids are going to duplicate
11 what we are experiencing from their parents.

12 If it is not going to change -- I
13 mean, where are they going to go? You have got
14 kids. Are we going to send them to another
15 neighborhood? Are you going to send them to some
16 other community? It has to change there.

17 It is not about saying, "You can't
18 live here." It is about educating people to say,
19 "This is what you do as a neighbor."

20 And what you do inside of your own
21 home is your business. But, as a neighbor, these
22 are simple rules that make this place better.

23 I am hoping that we can start that
24 type of dialogue so that Section 8 can reformulate
25 how people can get on the Section 8 program.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. MOODY: I wanted to find out, as
6 a homeowner, what rights do we have? None.
7 Everybody told me none.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. MOODY: None. I am there 34
10 years. And I have to move or take stuff off of this
11 woman for the rest of my life?

12 No way. No way. I can't live like
13 this.

14 CHAIRMAN COHEN: And you have been
15 given the wrong advice.

16 As a homeowner, you have many
17 rights. And this hearing involves, among other
18 things, those rights.

19 You ought never be subjected to the
20 kind of abuse that, you know, is being talked about
21 from those two homes.

22 MS. MOODY: Everybody I asked said --

23 CHAIRMAN COHEN: And that's what
24 we're working towards.

25 Councilwoman Krajewski.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.

3 First I want to ask, is there anyone
4 here from the Philadelphia Housing or the
5 Administration?

6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Is there anyone here
7 from Philadelphia Housing Authority?

8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: The people
9 came down here with questions regarding Section 8.
10 There is frustration out there. They have no one to
11 talk to.

12 They are coming down to Council, but
13 no answers are here.

14 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Is there anyone here
15 in the audience from Philadelphia Housing
16 Authority?

17 I am told that the Mayor has advised
18 the Philadelphia Housing Authority not to be present
19 today.

20 I cannot understand why he gave that
21 advice.

22 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: But this is
23 such an important issue.

24 CHAIRMAN COHEN: I agree with you.

25 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Councilwoman,

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2 Helena Dixon from PHA is here.

3 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Is she the
4 proper person we can address these questions to?
5 Can she make decisions? What can she do about
6 them?

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Well, she can take
8 it back, but Mr. Purnell is the proper person.

9 And the key situation is, Mr. Purnell
10 and the Mayor have agreed that they will come down
11 after this.

12 They will come down, we will have a
13 record of what is going on, what are the questions.
14 And the Mayor and PHA have committed themselves to a
15 date very soon, right after we recess this hearing,
16 to be here to answer all of the questions, to begin
17 putting forward whatever plan and what
18 recommendations we have.

19 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: So, in other
20 words, Councilman, we are saying this was all in
21 vain with the buses?

22 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: No, I don't think
23 so. I don't think it is in vain, Councilwoman,
24 because I think this is going to be reported.

25 It is a very different atmosphere

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2 than has been reported in the Inquirer. Because
3 what the Inquirer and the Daily News have put
4 forward about Section 8 have been very inflammatory,
5 has been only one side, and has only given the
6 viewpoint of a very small percentage of the citizens
7 of Philadelphia.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We are trying to
10 set a record, as Miss Felicia has stated, of what
11 Section 8 really is and what the problems are.

12 It is not in vain. If it were in
13 vain, I would not be here.

14 I wanted the Mayor to be here. I
15 think the Mayor should be here. I think PHA should
16 be here.

17 However, to me, the important people
18 that we have to listen to are the citizens who live
19 in neighborhoods and the residents of Section 8 that
20 are here.

21 And I want to hear from them, and
22 then we will deal with PHA, we will deal with the
23 landlords, and we will deal with the Mayor.

24 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: We also
25 have, Councilman, people who feel that Section 8 is

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2 a bad program.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIRMAN COHEN: We are going to hear

5 from them.

6 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We are going to

7 hear from them.

8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: My question

9 is, what can we in this Council do to help the

10 people who have problems with Section 8?

11 It is destroying every neighborhood

12 in the city. Look at the map here. The people --

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: -- the

15 people who live in the red marks should be up in

16 arms. Now they are moving slowly, the whole entire

17 city.

18 We have no neighborhoods left. We

19 have to do something about the Section 8, but I

20 refuse to sit here if we don't have anyone from PHA

21 or the Housing Authority or Mr. Kromer.

22 What about OHCD?

23 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilwoman, it is

24 the belief of this --

25 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I just blew

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2 a fuse.

3 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilwoman, it is
4 our belief that City Council has a very important
5 role to play in overseeing these other agencies.

6 Based on the information we get here
7 today, it is my view that City Council will take
8 action to enforce the changes that may be
9 necessary --

10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: In what
11 way?

12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: -- to get rid of
13 these abuses.

14 Well, we have budgetary power over a
15 number of the agencies.

16 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Councilman,
17 we have questions about the criteria. How do they
18 apply for Section 8?

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: This is the first
20 hearing, Councilwoman. We will deal with that. We
21 will be dealing with all those things.

22 We may not cover it all today.

23 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Will we be
24 able to go to Congress?

25 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Yes.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Will we be
3 able to stop it?

4 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Congressman Fattah
5 that is going to be here at this hearing very
6 shortly.

7 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: First of
8 all, I think we should have a million taxpayers
9 march to Washington.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Go ahead.

12 MR. ADAMS: My name is Felicia Adams,
13 yet again.

14 You are talking about -- and these
15 are my neighbors, too. And I was at their block
16 meeting, held by their block captain. I was invited
17 by an invitation.

18 When they brought up the issue of
19 this problem, Section 8 tenant, I said to them, "Did
20 you go to Section 8?"

21 When they brought up the issue about
22 the children, I said to them, "Did you go to DHS ?"
23 I brought all this up.

24 It is not just a problem with Section
25 8. In the 300 block, there are owners on my block

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2 who live in their property who do not sweep, who do
3 not shovel, who --

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. ADAMS: -- who, when I first
6 walked on that block, allowed their dogs to defecate
7 on my property. I had to go out there and clean it
8 up; they did not clean it up.

9 These are owners. These are
10 landlords who own other properties on this block.
11 Okay?

12 These are people who are taxpayers,
13 who pay their mortgage. And just because they pay
14 their mortgage, they are supposed to be better than
15 me? I don't think so.

16 (Applause.)

17 MR. ADAMS: So what I am saying to
18 you is, what I'm saying is, it is not a question of
19 whether it is a Section 8 tenant or whether it is a
20 homeowner; it is people, period. That's the bottom
21 line.

22 It is people who do not take care of
23 their property, and then there are those that do
24 take care of their property.

25 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Excuse me.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Excuse me. Can we
3 have silence?

4 MR. FELDGUS: This is the thing, this
5 is my suggestion, and this is how I try to handle it
6 as the block captain.

7 We go to the Philadelphia More
8 Beautiful Committee, we go to City Hall, we go to
9 anyplace we have to go to to get the brochures.

10 You all print so many brochures on
11 what a homeowner is supposed to do, on what a tenant
12 is supposed to do. The Tenant Action Committee
13 gives it out to you.

14 I have gotten stuff from Section 8
15 myself on what you are supposed to do and what you
16 are not supposed to do.

17 So the information is out there. The
18 information is there, if you want it. And because I
19 want it, I went and got it.

20 There are people who refuse to go get
21 it. These are my fellow block captains -- I mean,
22 fellow residents because we live 300, 400. We are
23 in the same area.

24 I am a good tenant and there are
25 other good tenants. The information that they need

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2 is out there; it is just that it is not getting to
3 them.

4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You are not
5 ruining the neighborhood, are you?

6 MR. ADAMS: No. No, I am not ruining
7 the neighborhood.

8 And like he said in his address, in
9 his testimony where he said the resident with her
10 two beautiful kids, that's me.

11 Everybody in South Philadelphia, in
12 our area, know my two kids. I mean, I can walk down
13 the street and they say, "Hi. You're Mark's
14 mother," because my son knows absolutely everyone.
15 We are a benefit to the neighborhood.

16 And what I'm saying is not just
17 Section 8 tenants who can be a benefit to the
18 neighborhood; it is homeowners.

19 Because like I said, on my block
20 alone, 300 block, as the block captain, I know of
21 homeowners who are landlords to properties who do
22 not take care of those properties.

23 I hear complaints from their tenants,
24 and they ask me what I can do. And I try to find
25 out the information for them.

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2 It is just not a Section 8 problem.

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: This is not a
4 Section 8 problem. Bad neighbors are bad neighbors,
5 and they come in all colors.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And I just want to
8 put something straight. Federal subsidies are
9 federal subsidies.

10 An individual that is a Section 8
11 gets a federal subsidy. I get a federal subsidy; I
12 have a mortgage. That mortgage is tax deductible.
13 That is a federal subsidy.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: That is a federal
16 subsidy. So a federal subsidy is a federal subsidy,
17 whichever way you want to put it up.

18 CHAIRMAN COHEN: And everybody in
19 this city has a right to live peacefully and to be
20 able to enjoy the possession of their home, whether
21 it is an owned home or whether it is a rented home.

22 And no one should ever get the
23 answers that were given to this woman when she
24 called for help.

25 The city exists for the purpose of

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2 helping people that need help. And every way,
3 whether they are homeowners or tenants -- and we
4 would like you to go see Wanda, who stood up before,
5 at the end to give her some more details on what you
6 talked about. And we want to be assisting you.

7 City Council has a job that very few
8 people know about. That job is an oversight job.

9 It is our duty as Council members to
10 see to it that all of the city agencies do what they
11 are supposed to do, provide the kind of services
12 that makes living in Philadelphia something we can
13 enjoy, rather than suffer from. And that's why we
14 are holding this hearing today.

15 We thank the Dickinson Street
16 Neighbors very much for their questions. We are
17 going to have to bring on other witnesses. We have
18 a very tight time schedule.

19 But we thought that the example set
20 by the Dickinson Street Neighbors is an outstanding
21 example of how the community gets concern, begins to
22 deal with the problems it has. We want to be of
23 service to you, and we intend to be.

24 Thank you very much.

25 (Applause.)

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Is Congressman
3 Fattah in the room yet?

4 Is State Representative Curtis Thomas
5 here? They are due in very shortly.

6 Councilwoman Blackwell would like to
7 make a statement.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you
9 very much.

10 Upon reviewing the map that's behind
11 me -- in fact, at a glance -- it would appear that
12 my district, the 3rd District, has more Section 8
13 tenants than anywhere in the city.

14 Let me say this -- and this is why I
15 was really, really concerned about having
16 hearings -- Section 8 was designed to enable people
17 to live anywhere they want.

18 It is a federal subsidy, because of
19 these harsh economic times, to give people a break.
20 It has nothing to do with who you are, how you are,
21 what your moral feelings are, what your religion or
22 ethnic background is.

23 I find it very, very dangerous in
24 getting into -- in fact, I was really concerned
25 about having hearings in the first place because of

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2 those issues.

3 People are supposed to live
4 anonymously in neighborhoods, and that was the
5 design of the entire program. And that is what we
6 needed to do, especially during these harsh economic
7 times.

8 And let me say that there are many,
9 many, many reasons why people have problems. And as
10 has been said back and forth behind me at the table,
11 we get complaints all the time.

12 But problems are based not on whether
13 or not you are on Section 8, but we have
14 neighborhood and community problems overall.

15 So let me say that, certainly, I have
16 and always will support any subsidies that allow
17 people to live in neighborhoods, to live decently in
18 neighborhoods.

19 And let's be very, very careful that
20 we don't send the message back to Washington that we
21 want somehow to threaten this subsidy. We just
22 can't afford it.

23 I don't know what we are going to
24 do. We can't put everybody in a shelter.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So let's be
3 very, very careful about how we handle hearings.
4 Because this is a program that is designed for and
5 does help people.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very much,
8 Councilwoman Blackwell.

9 Lynne Rotoli, the Mayfair Civic
10 Association.

11 We are going to ask, in order for
12 everyone to be able to hear, it is very important
13 that there be no second conversations going on at
14 the same time. It interferes with the very
15 difficult amplification.

16 Miss Rotoli, we are glad to see you
17 here. Please identify yourself for the record, keep
18 the microphone as close to you as is possible, real,
19 real close as mine is to me, and go ahead.

20 MS. LYNNE ROTOLI: My name is Lynne
21 Rotoli, R-O-T-O-L-I. I am with the President of the
22 Mayfair Civic Association, and here as a
23 representative of the people of Mayfair and some of
24 the people from the Northeast.

25 First I would like to commend our

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2 Dickinson Street friends for a wonderful outlook on
3 what can and cannot be done and what should and
4 should not be done. They were wonderful.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. ROTOLI: Councilman Ortiz said
7 that this program is working throughout the nation.
8 But I am here to say, Councilman, that it is not
9 working here in Philadelphia --

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's not
11 true.

12 MS. ROTOLI: -- for the people in the
13 Northeast that I am representing.

14 And I would like to read these few
15 pages of information that we have gotten.

16 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Please go ahead.

17 MS. ROTOLI: We understand that the
18 Section 8 was set up to help the needy, and that's
19 great.

20 When I get older, I hope there are
21 ways of helping me if I am in need. Or even if I
22 were widowed or something, I want to know that the
23 government is there to help me, too. And we
24 appreciate that.

25 The problem with this program as we

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2 to the Section 8 program in order to bring about
3 economic equity, while living a peaceful existence
4 with all of our neighbors.

5 With due respect now, I would like to
6 submit to you the two programs that we have been
7 able to ascertain, the two problems about this
8 program that we have been able to get from the
9 people in our neighborhood only that we represent.

10 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Please go ahead.

11 MS. ROTOLI: First of all, it is
12 money. The first one is money.

13 Fair market values, which are the
14 economic determinants of the amount paid to owners,
15 are surveyed on all of the people in the
16 Philadelphia counties, which includes the pricier
17 Bucks County and Montgomery County, Delaware
18 County.

19 And this escalates rents in
20 Philadelphia and makes it more attractive for people
21 to have rental properties in Philadelphia; while the
22 suburbs, it makes it less attractive.

23 And there are -- we don't know the
24 percentage of those out of Philadelphia, but it is
25 not as attractive for owners to want to have Section

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2 8 properties outside of the city.

3 Also, in Mayfair, our properties
4 taxes have increased and been reassessed, while the
5 amount that we can sell our properties for is
6 decreasing. While that's not a Section 8 problem,
7 it is a rental problem.

8 What's happening is, we have
9 witnessed rising rental properties throughout our
10 neighborhoods. And we fear that additional
11 property, rental properties, may hold to its
12 decline.

13 And I am trying to explain this is
14 what a fear is, and this is something that may be
15 addressed.

16 Many neighbors are choosing to flee.
17 But in our area, many people are contractually
18 obligated to stay in Philadelphia, or we just love
19 the area.

20 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Excuse me. Could
21 you go back? Because I didn't understand the bit.

22 You are talking about the taxes may
23 cause people to flee?

24 MS. ROTOLI: That's a possibility,
25 too.

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2 We are not saying that people are
3 fleeing just because of this one program. But we're
4 saying, with the culmination of other kinds of
5 things that are happening in our city, our property
6 values are declining, while the taxes are
7 increasing. It is an incentive to leave an area.

8 These are the people we don't want to
9 leave the area. We want to keep them here somehow.

10 So in looking at the Section 8
11 program, trying to help it and change it a little
12 bit, that may be one reason we may be able to keep
13 them here in Philadelphia.

14 The first problem, as I said, was
15 money. The second problem is a stake in the
16 community and appreciation for the community at
17 large.

18 We have seen the property owners, who
19 have disposable income to invest in these rental
20 properties, rarely, rarely live in their rental
21 properties.

22 Cries have come for many generations
23 about the decline of the generation, but the
24 abundance of drugs and the abundance of crime is not
25 decreasing in our area.

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2 At a time when communities must rely
3 on their own residents to volunteer to maintain the
4 area in terms of Town Watches and civic
5 associations, little leagues and church
6 organizations, where are these non-residential
7 property owners?

8 The same question can be posed of the
9 renters, who, as we have experienced firsthand, tend
10 to keep to themselves and rarely become an active
11 part in the community.

12 Once again, the burden of maintenance
13 is on the homeowners, who in many cases have more
14 than one job per household and very little spare
15 time.

16 We listened to our Dickinson Street
17 friends who helped shovel snow. That's what we
18 need. It is not, "I was out there helping"; it is
19 you just do it because it needs to be done.

20 That's the kind of community that you
21 need to build in order to strengthen the areas.

22 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Excuse me,
23 ma'am. I don't mean to interrupt you. Can I just
24 ask you one quick question?

25 MS. ROTOLI: Absolutely.

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2 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: What zip code do
3 you live in?

4 MS. ROTOLI: I live in 19149.

5 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. Thank
6 you.

7 MS. ROTOLI: Finally, no one has
8 recognized the needs of the community at large,
9 which was also said by our friends in the Dickinson
10 Street group, in discussions that surround this
11 whole entire issue.

12 We ask that, along with recognizing
13 the rights of owners and the tenants, that you also
14 recognize the rights of the community at large.

15 Sensitive need has to be made to the
16 owners and the renters as you discuss any way that
17 might aid this program.

18 And if I can take two more minutes of
19 your time, we have come up with solutions. And
20 that's the one thing I would like to give to all of
21 you.

22 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Go ahead. We would
23 like to hear your suggestions.

24 MS. ROTOLI: Okay. Well, thank you,
25 sir, Councilman.

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2 But the General Fund, in your home,
3 if you keep your own personal records, it is from
4 where you would pay all of the day-to-day expenses.

5 MS. ROTOLI: The living in
6 Philadelphia fund, though, would that also come from
7 the General Fund or is that something --

8 CHAIRMAN COHEN: I don't know what
9 that fund is. Living in Philadelphia fund?

10 MS. ROTOLI: Well, that's at the very
11 end.

12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: You will have to
13 talk to me separately about the existence of that
14 fund. It is not a city fund.

15 MS. ROTOLI: I would be very happy
16 to.

17 We would like to propose that we work
18 and vote together with other government officials to
19 change the fair market values to reflect an area,
20 whether it be a zip code or a county or -- not even
21 a county, because each area gets its own rents; that
22 might be a viable solution.

23 We ask that you impose a community,
24 just like the people from Dickinson street, impose a
25 level of community service that is paid back by both

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2 the owner and the tenants who are benefitting from
3 the program.

4 If the owner doesn't have the time,
5 but does have the money to give back, maybe a 10
6 percent -- if you are receiving \$800 in rental fees
7 from a Section 8 property, maybe 10 percent of that
8 per month could be put into whatever community group
9 they would like to put it into, and this way they
10 are doing their part.

11 If there is no money involved, if
12 there are services that can be offered back to the
13 community.

14 If it is a tenant, ask that they work
15 within their community X amount of hours.

16 If in that same \$800 rental, 600 of
17 it is being subsidized, then whatever the minimum
18 wage is divided by that \$600, might be put 12 hours
19 per community service.

20 Communities would welcome that kind
21 of help. That's part of being part of the
22 community.

23 And that's part of the problem, as we
24 stated in number two.

25 We asked that --

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2 (Applause.)

3 MS. ROTOLI: -- in keeping with that
4 possible solution, we ask that you require
5 affidavits from the people who are benefitting from
6 the program that be signed by the local community
7 groups, just like they do in the local high schools
8 and other youth groups, where we give back to the
9 community.

10 We are asking that people, somebody
11 give something back to "we the people" who are
12 supporting this program.

13 We ask that when you are giving
14 incentive to builders, when builders are
15 incentivized to build new housing, that a fair and
16 equitable market rate be set, that these rates be
17 published so that the taxpayers can see them, the
18 formula be published, along with the conclusion and
19 the names of the people who made that decision so
20 that we know.

21 We know where to vote, what to do,
22 who to talk to, who to call, who we should address
23 with any kinds of problems that we have.

24 We ask that you, our City Council,
25 organize a Section 8 reform panel that includes

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2 community members from all the communities so that
3 we may be able to help this situation.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. ROTOLI: We ask that -- and these
6 are solutions, possible solutions.

7 We ask that a five-year time limit be
8 placed on the ownership of Section 8 certificates.

9 We don't know how they are monitored,
10 but we had this one woman, who I would gladly hire
11 in a second, as an administrator who comes out and
12 she gets people together to do her area.

13 We think that during the time that
14 recipients are on Section 8 certificates, that there
15 should be some training involved with that on house
16 maintenance or marketable job skills or resume
17 building or other items that might help them be
18 productive in the future and may help them produce
19 productive Philadelphia.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. ROTOLI: We ask that abandoned
22 homes throughout the city be revamped through other
23 kinds of funds that may be gained.

24 Maybe the owners, in their money that
25 they give back to the communities, revamp homes

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2 properties. It is an impossible situation.

3 MS. ROTOLI: 11,000 properties.

4 And so, therefore, something needs to
5 be done as far as that is concerned immediately, so
6 that the other concerns may be answered.

7 And we do ask you that you do take
8 the community at large seriously. Because it is a
9 community problem in terms of money and in terms of
10 stake.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
13 much. There are going to be some questions.

14 We are going to ask the questions be
15 very brief and the answers be brief.

16 Congressman Fattah is here. He has
17 graciously consented to wait while we do this
18 questioning. And we would like to give him the
19 opportunity to be present and to be heard.

20 Councilwoman Blackwell.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: My question
22 to you is, do you realize that we do have
23 communities where Section 8 tenants are involved?
24 One young lady just spoke who talked about her
25 involvement in her community.

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2 Because a person is living in a
3 Section 8 building doesn't mean that they don't
4 care, that they are not leaders in their community,
5 that they don't clean up, that they are not
6 involved.

7 We even have college students who are
8 renters in my area, which has a majority of the
9 Section 8 in the city.

10 People work together, they are
11 involved. To imply that because a person rents
12 makes them irresponsible is absolutely unfair.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
15 certainly you mentioned owners and tenants. On one
16 hand you mentioned owners should be involved; on one
17 hand you mentioned tenants should be involved.
18 Well, oftentimes you have both involved or either/or
19 who are involved.

20 I only want to say in closing that in
21 America, everybody has rights, not just homeowners.
22 And that you have to realize that when people have
23 rights, people in communities are doing many of the
24 things that you are criticizing them for.

25 Communities are working. I don't

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2 know, maybe you live in a closed community where you
3 don't see it. But where the majority of us live, we
4 see people who do work together, with a minimum of
5 problems, with all rental programs.

6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you,
7 Councilwoman. That doesn't require an answer.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. ROTOLI: May I respond to that?

10 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Yes, go ahead.

11 MS. ROTOLI: With all due respect, I
12 can only talk about my neighborhood and what I see.

13 And I am on the front line,
14 volunteering at least 30 hours a week to the
15 community, an over-abundance of what one person
16 should possibly do, but that's what I do.

17 So I can tell you that we have on
18 each of our -- on the corners of each of our
19 neighborhoods, there are four rental properties.
20 And I can tell you that not one person is involved
21 in anything.

22 And I'm not saying they are Section
23 8; I am saying they are rental properties. And I
24 can tell you that of those people, very few of the
25 owners are seen, and none of the renters are heard

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2 from. Just so that you know what --

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We can rent
4 as well as own. And we can be on Section 8 and
5 other rental programs, as well as buy.

6 Everybody can't live in your world.
7 But in America, they can live here.

8 MS. ROTOLI: That's correct.
9 Absolutely. And we welcome them all.

10 Finally, this is a homeowner's issue,
11 though. We are talking about the Philadelphia
12 Housing Authority and those people that -- not
13 homeowners, but people who live in properties and
14 take stake in the community. So that's the second
15 part of this whole thing.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You said
17 they are not renters that are not Section 8.

18 I don't know what program you are
19 talking about. You talk about assessments, that
20 seems to be a tax issue.

21 This hearing is on Section 8.

22 MS. ROTOLI: That is correct.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It is not on
24 general rental programs, it is not on the tax issue
25 and reassessment. That's another hearing. As

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2 Councilman Nutter just said, that's for tomorrow.

3 Today we are talking about Section 8.

4 And as I said, everybody has a right,
5 not just homeowners in one neighborhood. Everybody
6 who lives in this country and in this city has a
7 right.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Just a couple of
10 quick questions.

11 And what Councilwoman Blackwell was
12 referring to is that there is a public hearing
13 tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock to talk about the
14 city's assessment and reassessment process and
15 program that's run by the Board of Revision of
16 Taxes. That's at 2 o'clock tomorrow afternoon.

17 Ma'am, I appreciate your testimony.
18 But I have to admit to you that I am not exactly
19 clear on what you believe to be the problems of the
20 Section 8 program in your neighborhood
21 specifically.

22 You talked about taxes; you talked
23 about home ownership, you talked about rental. But
24 I am left unclear as to what the specific problems
25 are with Section 8 properties in your particular

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2 area.

3 But I did want to put on the record
4 that -- you indicated that you live in the zip code
5 of 19149?

6 MS. ROTOLI: That's correct.

7 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: All right. You
8 have 92 Section 8 units in the zip code of 19149.
9 That's as compared to, say, 19144, where there are
10 956.

11 But in your particular area, the
12 Section 8 units represent 3 percent of all of the
13 rental units in your zip code. You have 3,310
14 rental units in the zip code in which you live. 92
15 of them are Section 8.

16 Now, what's going on with the other
17 97 percent of the rental properties in your zip
18 code? What's going on with them?

19 MS. ROTOLI: You asked where I live.
20 But where I represent, there are 12 zip codes
21 involved.

22 And it is not in numbers; it is a
23 feeling, it is a problem. It is the specifics we
24 talked about --

25 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I understand

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2 that. You are entitled to your feelings. I am
3 trying to understand them. And you can pour them
4 out on this record, if you like.

5 I don't live where you live, and I
6 don't understand completely what the issues are.
7 That's why I told you that I wasn't clear on what
8 the problems were.

9 But all I have is some factual
10 information. I am trying to match that with, in
11 your words, your feelings.

12 What is the problem?

13 MS. ROTOLI: I was not asked to bring
14 specifics down here. If I were, I would have
15 brought all those people who spoke at our meeting
16 two weeks ago and came to tell us what their
17 specific problem was.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well, you were at
19 the meeting, and I wasn't. Tell me three things
20 that the people said at the meeting.

21 MS. ROTOLI: They said that the
22 neighbors don't upkeep their property, are staying
23 out late at night, and staying up too late.

24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Staying up too
25 late for who?

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2 MS. ROTOLI: They are staying up and
3 disrupting the neighbors.

4 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. And are
5 they Section 8 tenants, or are they the other part
6 of the 97 percent in your zip code that are not
7 Section 8? Who are they?

8 MS. ROTOLI: When we were able to
9 have them call PHA, we found that they were Section
10 8 people.

11 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. So the
12 Section 8 people stay up too late at night.

13 MS. ROTOLI: I think you are reducing
14 this to the ridiculous, sir.

15 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: No. I am trying
16 to go through the various problems. I am dead
17 serious. I am dead serious.

18 I am trying to understand what the
19 problem is and how that can be addressed.

20 MS. ROTOLI: We can reiterate exactly
21 what our friends in the 400 --

22 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Let's have order.
23 Lively questioning and answering is okay, but let's
24 have order.

25 The questions are not intended to

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2 offend the witness.

3 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: In no way, shape,
4 or form, Mr. Chairman.

5 CHAIRMAN COHEN: I'm sure the witness
6 is not intending to offend anyone.

7 But we are trying to get at some
8 facts, and that's what's involved.

9 Go ahead, Councilman.

10 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: I yield to --

11 MS. ROTOLI: Facts and feelings,
12 also. I know that we are trying to keep our
13 feelings out of this.

14 But I have been asked to represent --
15 to find out what the people thought. And that is
16 exactly what I brought here.

17 I see the map, sir. I know the
18 numbers. I don't know all of the numbers. I know
19 the numbers from what you just said.

20 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Ma'am, I just
21 spoke to Helen Dixon from PHA.

22 Out of that meeting in Mayfair, there
23 were seven properties that were called into PHA that
24 were rental properties. None of them was on Section
25 8.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: None of those
4 properties was a Section 8 property.

5 Seven came out of that meeting.

6 Seven addresses came out of that meeting, and none
7 of the addresses were in the Section 8 program.

8 They might have been renters. They
9 might have been renters; they might not have been
10 homeowners. But none of them were in the Section 8
11 program.

12 MS. ROTOLI: And we also read that in
13 the Inquirer.

14 But I will also tell you that, of the
15 78 calls that I got, 60 of them were. So,
16 therefore, they didn't need to call her. They knew
17 to call us, or they called Manuel Costa, who also
18 had to check for us. So we were prepared.

19 We are just trying to explain to you
20 that Section 8 --

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Manuel Costa was
22 the one who checked the seven properties that were
23 given to him, and none of them were on Section 8.

24 MS. ROTOLI: We hoped that the
25 meeting of 1200 in Mayfair was more of a

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2 constructive and listening, rather than a
3 destructive and criticizing.

4 We wanted to find out answers, and
5 that is what we had set up on that PHA meeting that
6 night.

7 We tried to maintain the integrity of
8 the program to find out what it was all about.

9 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Ma'am, as I said,
10 unfortunately, I was not at that meeting.

11 If you could provide through the two
12 co-chairs of the committee, if there was anything
13 written out of that meeting, if anyone took any kind
14 of notes, if there were questions that were asked.

15 I read the newspaper story. It
16 seemed to indicate, one of the newspaper stories
17 seemed to indicate, that you, the group, put forward
18 a bunch of questions, and at least one of the
19 community leaders said that answers were received.
20 I don't know what the questions were.

21 But if you could share with the
22 Chairs, and they will share with the members of the
23 Committee and the rest of the Council, just what the
24 meeting was about and what kind of information
25 people wanted and what the statements were that were

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2 made and what the problems were that people
3 articulated, I would greatly appreciate it.

4 And, again, I want to say to you, I
5 certainly meant no disrespect to you at all in my
6 questioning.

7 My colleagues certainly know the
8 kinds of questions that I ask. And I regret if
9 anyone took the Q and A between us in anything less
10 than a serious manner. It was meant to be serious.

11 MS. ROTOLI: And I will let you know
12 that those answers and questions were all faxed to
13 Councilman Ortiz two days after the meeting.

14 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you,
15 ma'am.

16 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.
17 Councilman Kenney.

18 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 I was at the meeting. And, for the
21 record, some of the issues that some of the
22 residents raised were issues of the numbers of
23 people that were living in a particular property, as
24 it related to the number of people who were
25 registered on the lease to be living there. That's

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2 one concern that was raised.

3 The second concern that was raised is
4 that the 11 inspectors who were inspecting these
5 10,000 or 11,000 properties are only permitted to
6 inspect relative to Housing Code, Building Code
7 violations, and not to social interaction and social
8 problems.

9 Some of the other issues that were
10 raised were issues of late-night rowdiness in a
11 weekday situation, where people are trying to sleep
12 to go to work in the morning.

13 MS. ROTOLI: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: And, additionally,
15 the way in which people put out trash, on what day
16 the trash goes out.

17 Seemingly, taken individually, simple
18 kinds of things, but cumulatively can create a
19 situation where there is some lack of comfort in the
20 neighborhood as to the property's use and some of
21 the activities that may or may not be going on with
22 the property, and the way in which the property is
23 managed.

24 Both from a landlord perspective,
25 when property requests for repair are made and not

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2 done appropriately, and that affects the tenant in a
3 very adverse way because they don't want to live in
4 that property with a leaky roof or with bad
5 electrical work or anything like that, so that's
6 part of the problem.

7 And the other problem is kind of
8 making sure that people have the necessary skills
9 and are given the necessary counseling to run a
10 home.

11 I have said this many times before.
12 I have owned a home now for a number of years.
13 Every winter my brother needs to come over to my
14 house to put the water in my system for my radiator
15 because I don't know how to do it.

16 I know you have to put a little bit
17 of water in, and you run up to the further part in
18 the house, and you have to turn the key and let the
19 air out of the thing. I don't know how to do any of
20 that.

21 And those are simple skills that a
22 person has to have in order to run a property
23 effectively.

24 And I think that one of the things we
25 are looking to do, hopefully out of these hearings,

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2 considering them, as well as that list of questions
3 and answers that you sent to Councilman Ortiz.

4 Thank you very much.

5 (Applause.)

6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Congressman Fattah.

7 Congressman, we are very pleased,
8 indeed, that you were able to be here today. And we
9 would very much like to hear your thoughts on the
10 subject matter.

11 CONGRESSMAN CHAKA FATTAH: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman. And let me, by way of greetings to
13 all the members of Council, say it is a pleasure for
14 me to be here, even though I am sure for all of us
15 we find this to be an issue that is troubling. But,
16 nonetheless, let me say a couple of things.

17 We took note the other week,
18 unfortunately, on the passing of two of the city's
19 finest employees, fire personnel, one black, one
20 white, attempting to carry out their work.

21 And it brings that to mind, as we
22 look at this Section 8 issue. Because there,
23 seemingly, throughout a lot of the discussion, which
24 is not based on the facts, but based on the
25 inability of people to kind of get beyond some of

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2 these prejudices, that people have --

3 (Applause.)

4 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: -- that we need
5 to deal with, it is kind of like Rodney King asking,
6 "Why we can't all get along?"

7 And I start my comments there because
8 when I am in Washington, for those of us who work
9 away from the city, whether in Harrisburg or
10 Washington, we get to hear things and see things.

11 And what was on the national news a
12 few months ago was the circumstances in which a
13 family had moved into Grays Ferry. And there was an
14 incident, and then a number of other instances, that
15 brought national attention to our city that was not
16 welcomed attention.

17 And it is very, very important, in a
18 city where we have various racial, ethnic, and
19 religious groupings, that we work together to deal
20 with issues that concern us and we not use, you
21 know, other issues as ways to kind of get around the
22 real problems.

23 I don't think that there is any
24 problem with Section 8 that can't be corrected
25 either by federal legislation or by the

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2 administration at PHA.

3 The Congress in October passed a
4 restructuring bill for Section 8 to deal with some
5 of what I consider to be the real issues, how we get
6 more of a fair market rate, in terms of some of the
7 project-based Section 8 programs.

8 So that the dollars that are being
9 used are not unfairly going to enrich landlords, but
10 are being actually used to help citizens.

11 And in that bill we appropriated some
12 \$9 billion in Section 8, for some 1.6 million
13 families across this country, to have the ability to
14 have some assistance in terms of their living
15 circumstances.

16 But there is room for improvement. I
17 think that it is clear that the issues that we have
18 known for some time in terms of Section 8, that we
19 have to have more inspectors at the local level; we
20 have to make sure that the properties are well
21 maintained.

22 We also need to know that when people
23 are renting, whether through Section 8 or any other
24 vehicle, that they don't have a right to destroy
25 neighborhoods or to be a discomfort to their

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2 neighbors.

3 But we should be clear that the vast
4 majority of renters in our city are not being
5 subsidized by Section 8, that the vast majority of
6 people who are renting are not being subsidized by
7 any government program, but are renters.

8 We also live in a city in which we
9 have the highest rate of home ownership of almost
10 any other city in the country. And in terms of
11 African-American home ownership, we have the highest
12 of any city in the country.

13 And so we need to, as the Council has
14 done, continue to work to build home ownership
15 opportunities. We need to continue to try to deal
16 with quality-of-life issues in communities, which I
17 know a number of members are concerned about.

18 But we should not be singling out
19 families based on whether or not they are subsidized
20 in some form under a federal program that makes them
21 eligible.

22 This city, and every neighborhood in
23 it, has to understand that it is the law of this
24 government, at the federal level, that people have
25 the right to live anywhere that they want to live,

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2 in any neighborhood, on any street.

3 (Applause.)

4 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: And that it is a
5 violation of federal law to impede someone's right
6 to a peaceful existence in those neighborhoods,
7 particularly if that is focused at their race or
8 religious background.

9 And so we should, as we look at how
10 to improve upon Section 8 -- Section 8 is not the
11 only program that I think gives rise in some cases
12 to some of these issues.

13 There are other programs around that
14 do also, I think, invite the Council's attention, in
15 terms of how to improve those programs.

16 But we live in a city in which there
17 are over 30,000 vacant, abandoned, deteriorated row
18 homes.

19 If we have people who are prepared to
20 fix up homes and to rent them out to either renters
21 without Section 8 subsidy or with Section 8 subsidy,
22 in most neighborhoods that should be a welcomed
23 addition, rather than a vacant building that is
24 deteriorating that can be the site of crime or fires
25 or other types of problems.

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2 So we should be encouraging the
3 appropriate use of these residential structures.

4 And to the degree that we, as a city,
5 can focus, I think, more appropriately on some of
6 the real issues, which is that there are -- there is
7 a need in our city to confront the issue of race
8 more directly, not through the kind of subterfuge of
9 Section 8.

10 We should have a discussion. We
11 should understand that in this city, in every
12 community, there are people who make a very
13 important contribution to making this city what it
14 is.

15 And that in every community, in every
16 neighborhood, there are people who act in
17 anti-social ways, and that they should appropriately
18 be dealt with.

19 But we should not, because of the
20 color of someone's skin or their religious
21 background, or any other distinction that one might
22 want to draw, inappropriately ascribe to them
23 actions that are, in somebody's mind, a stereotype
24 of behavior that, unfortunately, in their own family
25 upbringing or in some other way they have not been

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2 able to come to realize that you can't judge people
3 and you should not judge people or groups of people
4 based on the actions of isolated individuals.

5 So I would hope that the Council --
6 (Applause.)

7 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: I would hope
8 that as the Council goes forward, that you will look
9 at the restructuring bill that passed the Congress.

10 There have been new appropriations
11 that have been made to deal with some of the other
12 undermining issues, underlying issues in Section 8.

13 We have a number of buildings that
14 are not only in physical distress, but are in fiscal
15 distress. And there has been a multi-billion-dollar
16 appropriation so that these Section 8 renewals can
17 go forward.

18 And it is in none of our interests as
19 a city to have families with small children homeless
20 on our streets.

21 We need to utilize these federal
22 resources in ways in which we can strengthen
23 neighborhoods and which people can understand that
24 there are people of every ethnic and religious
25 background who benefit under Section 8 and who need

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2 those benefits and need that support so that they
3 can maintain an existence for their families.

4 And so we would hope to live in a
5 world in which people had all of the resources that
6 they would need, but that's not the world that we
7 live in. And that's why the United States Congress
8 has appropriated this money.

9 And I know that Congressman Borski,
10 and those others who serve in Washington, Senator
11 Spector, Senator Santorum, we want this program to
12 be able to work to the benefit of the individual
13 families and to strengthen neighborhoods, so that
14 rather than have buildings that would not be
15 utilized, have them be utilized. But in no way
16 would we condone tenants who don't appropriately
17 respect the values and the culture in a community.

18 But we will not and we cannot allow
19 the laws of our country to be violated. People
20 cannot be run out of neighborhoods because they
21 live -- they happen to live in a neighborhood in
22 which they are in a minority because of their racial
23 or religious grouping.

24 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
25 much.

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2 (Applause.)

3 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very much
4 for your very thoughtful comments.

5 I am just pleased that, generally,
6 the discussion in the city has been at almost a
7 surprisingly civil level.

8 Different points of views have been
9 expressed, but they have been expressed in a manner
10 in which most people have concluded what we're
11 seeking is not to kill the program, because it does
12 so much good, but to improve it to get rid of
13 whatever problems may exist.

14 Councilman Kenney.

15 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very
16 much, Mr. Chairman.

17 (Applause.)

18 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Congressman, I
19 would like to thank you for being here today and
20 taking the time out of your schedule to come here
21 and give your thoughts, which are very, very timely
22 as we discuss this issue.

23 Knowing your long-term involvement,
24 before even going into the Congress, with issues of
25 housing, adequate housing, available housing, and

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2 fair housing, I am confident that with your and
3 Congressman Borski's work, along with the Senate
4 leadership, that we can make the improvements to
5 this program that are necessary.

6 All of us at the beginning, at the
7 outset of this hearing made statements about our
8 support for the program and our desire to see it
9 improved to serve more people in a better fashion.

10 One of the things that I would like
11 Congress to look at -- and I know that Congress has
12 looked at this, but I would like to do some more
13 work together with Congress on this issue -- is the
14 issue of home ownership.

15 I think that no one in this room
16 would disagree that the preferable, preferable
17 situation would be for people to own their home, to
18 be working towards paying for their home or to be
19 subsidized towards owning a home, as opposed to
20 landlords and other people who are gaining money
21 from the rentals.

22 I think that every neighborhood in
23 the city, regardless of its ethnicity or race, does
24 move towards home ownership as the paradigm model
25 for what we should be about in the city.

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2 know you work towards it every day -- to try to
3 maybe flush out some more home ownership
4 opportunities, to take some of those dollars that we
5 use towards rental payments, and move them towards
6 mortgages and other types of subsidies to allow
7 people to own their homes, at which point you know
8 people have a better stake and more of a pride and
9 dignity about where it is they live.

10 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Well,
11 Councilman, I think that you are absolutely
12 correct. And we are looking now -- and I have met
13 with Secretary Fumo and other members of Congress
14 who are interested -- at whether or not we could
15 utilize Section 8 certificates, rather than just for
16 rental payments, but whether or not, in conjunction
17 with a local government like here in Philadelphia,
18 we could create programs in which those dollars
19 could go to actually provide economic empowerment
20 for these families and to give them a stake in their
21 own housing circumstances. So I think you are right
22 on point.

23 And there is a lot of work that has
24 been done to deal with one of the issues that I
25 think fairly should be criticized in Section 8;

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2 whereas, Section 8 is paying a much higher rate for
3 rental of a property than what's being paid in the
4 home next door.

5 I don't think any of us, as taxpayers
6 and as people who are concerned about providing
7 affordable housing for people, want to see a
8 circumstance in which landlords are allowed to get
9 away with charging for a program to help low-income
10 citizens and families more money than they would
11 have otherwise, would have been able to receive
12 through a fair market rental.

13 (Applause.)

14 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very much
15 and thank you for your attendance today.

16 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you,
17 Congressman. May we impose just one further request
18 on you?

19 The Philadelphia Office of HUD was
20 scheduled to testify at the hearing today. Late
21 yesterday they informed the committee that they
22 would not be available to testify, and we fear that
23 that's impeding the progress of this committee.

24 We very strongly urge upon you to let
25 the Secretary of HUD be informed of that.

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2 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Mr. Chairman, I
3 will do that.

4 And I have, in conjunction with
5 Senator Specter and Senator Santorum and Congressman
6 Borski, and our late departing, on his way to Italy,
7 Congressman Foglietta, we have formed a Federal
8 Funds Council, that I am Chairing, looking at how
9 federal funds are being utilized in Philadelphia, to
10 make sure that programs like this are working as
11 effectively as they can.

12 We want to work with the Council, as
13 you go forward.

14 These are some very important
15 issues. And we have to separate out the
16 legitimate -- everybody who is complaining about
17 Section 8 is not complaining because they have some
18 racial, or otherwise some untoward motive.

19 There are some legitimate problems
20 that need to be worked through, and we should work
21 through those problems.

22 CHAIRMAN COHEN: But that doesn't
23 help its cause by boycotting this meeting.

24 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: No. What I am
25 saying to you is that I am willing to work with you

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2 to make sure that HUD fully cooperates with the
3 Council as you seek to find ways to improve the
4 Section 8 program.

5 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Very good. Thank
6 you.

7 Councilwoman Fernandez.

8 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Thank you,
9 Councilman Cohen.

10 It is great to see you here,
11 Congressman Fattah, since you represent me and my
12 family. We are proud to have you in Washington.
13 Three questions.

14 Since I'm not sure, I would love to
15 know what your position is on three specifics.

16 One would be, do you feel there are
17 enough PHA inspectors currently --

18 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: No.

19 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: -- at least
20 authorized?

21 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: From what I --

22 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Is it true
23 that there are 11 authorized?

24 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Yes. From what
25 I understand, there are 11 that are authorized. But

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2 question is, if there was a situation where a
3 landlord was not keeping their properties up, yet
4 still taking the federal and public dollars, do you
5 foresee some tougher sanctions so that Section 8
6 certificates could be lifted?

7 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Well, in part of
8 the restructuring effort that was passed in late
9 October, there is an increased focus at the federal
10 level where we want to encourage a broader
11 participation, I think is what the bill calls for,
12 between state housing agencies and local public
13 housing authorities, nonprofits and for-profits.

14 This is not a problem isolated to
15 Philadelphia. Public housing authorities throughout
16 the country have had similar difficulties.

17 And so the bill really kind of
18 creates more of a shareholder group in which there
19 would be a number of entities that would be involved
20 in verifying and certifying these buildings, and
21 also looking at the fair market rate issue and some
22 of these other issues.

23 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: I was also
24 concerned about decertifying or lifting the
25 certificate if there is a landlord --

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2 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: It would deal
3 with a whole gamut of administering Section 8 at the
4 local community level, yes.

5 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: My third
6 question would be, where there is a tenant receiving
7 Section 8 dollars who is convicted of either buying
8 or selling drugs, do you feel that would be grounds
9 for having that person suspended from the program?

10 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Well, let me say
11 this: That, number one, tenants -- and I just want
12 the record to be clear -- don't receive Section 8
13 dollars.

14 What they receive is a certificate
15 that allows them to negotiate a rental agreement,
16 and those Section 8 dollars were to flow to the
17 landlord.

18 But I think in any circumstance where
19 someone has violated the law, and particularly as it
20 relates to the most destructive impact we have in
21 our neighborhoods, which is drugs, that they should
22 not be entitled to any assistance under Section 8.

23 But I would be careful. I would be
24 very careful here. Because I know that there have
25 been other efforts in this regard, both by the local

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2 that.

3 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: -- that we don't
4 have unintended consequences.

5 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: And I would
6 agree with you. But I think it also needs to be a
7 little tighter than it is now.

8 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: I agree.

9 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Thank you.
10 (Applause.)

11 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Mr. Chairman, I
12 am going to have to leave in about eight minutes. I
13 was here to testify at 10 o'clock, and things were a
14 little backed up.

15 I just want to make everyone aware
16 that I have to depart soon.

17 CHAIRMAN COHEN: I wanted to
18 congratulate you on your Fair Trade vote, or
19 Fast-Track legislation. I thought it was a very
20 courageous action by you and deserving of support.

21 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilwoman
23 Blackwell.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman. I only wanted to thank the

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2 Congressman.

3 Certainly also as my Congressman, we
4 worked together on this and many, many issues. And
5 I think he is doing a great job in Washington.

6 And I think his statement on Section
7 8 was a fair statement and a true statement. And we
8 thank him for his work in this area.

9 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Thank you,
10 Councilwoman.

11 (Applause.)

12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilwoman Tasco.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Good morning,
14 Congressman. We appreciate your coming here today
15 and your comments about the program.

16 Oftentimes what happens, because the
17 bureaucrats can't get it together, we want to throw
18 the baby out with the bath.

19 And there are problems with Section
20 8. We need to look at that. And hopefully that the
21 people in Washington will utilize the support from
22 the various community organizations and the concerns
23 they have, and take those into account when they are
24 changing and restructuring the law.

25 I just want to say to you that what I

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2 think ought to happen, if you can possibly do it, is
3 to incorporate some dollars into the federal
4 legislation for supportive services for families who
5 are on Section 8.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: We have the
8 Dignity Housing Program in the City of
9 Philadelphia.

10 And when I first came on board, there
11 was some discussion in City Council about how to
12 give houses, donate houses, to that program. And
13 certainly the 9th Councilmanic District has the
14 largest portion in my district of those houses.

15 But I will say that program works.
16 They take people who are or have been homeless, put
17 them to work, and also work with them to deal with
18 the problems they have on a day-to-day basis.
19 Because, you know, they probably need some support.

20 And that program is working. And I
21 think Section 8 can work, if given the supportive
22 services that are needed for this program.

23 And I suggest that we look at that,
24 in addition to restructuring, that some dollars are
25 sent to us to help with the supportive services.

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2 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: I know of your
3 concern. And let me say, I would go further than
4 that.

5 I believe that it would be very
6 appropriate for us to strongly consider having these
7 units managed and maintained by community
8 development corporations that are based in these
9 neighborhoods, that exist maybe in cooperation with
10 tenant association partnerships.

11 You are well aware of the work of the
12 Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation
13 in your district, which is one of the finest CDCs in
14 the nation, where you have neighborhood-based people
15 who are concerned about keeping the housing stock
16 up, who understand how vitally important it is to
17 have decent housing stock in the community, and that
18 PHA, as I have said, with other housing authorities,
19 have found it difficult to have the same level of
20 sensitivity to some of these issues.

21 And I think that we could at least
22 look at an experimental program in which we could
23 have qualified CDCs be contracted through PHA, or
24 directly through HUD, to manage some group of these
25 houses.

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2 So that at least as we are dealing
3 with this issue, we have people who have shown a
4 commitment in their communities to affordable
5 housing, and often empower people at a community
6 basis, since there has been an obvious failure of
7 the government to be able to do it from a long-reach
8 standpoint. So there are ways to go about this.

9 Again, I think if we could get some
10 of the unfortunate issues out of the way, and deal
11 with straightly the issues related to how do we
12 maintain quality, affordable housing in our
13 communities, there are ways for all of us to work
14 together on these issues.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: If you will look
16 at the map, you will see that a large number of the
17 Section 8's are in the Northwest section.

18 And we have checked with the
19 community leaders and other elected officials in the
20 district to see what kinds of problems that have
21 existed. They are minor.

22 When we have a complaint, we contact
23 PHA. They have been responsive to us.

24 And in terms of renters, if we know a
25 house is being rented, we contact the landlord. And

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2 my office calls the landlord and says that your
3 people are not being good neighbors, and what are
4 you going to do about it. And we have had some
5 success in addressing those problems.

6 But the leaders in my district
7 believe that we should keep the Section 8 program,
8 don't throw the baby out with the bath, but there
9 are some supportive services that are needed, and
10 they don't want clustering.

11 Because there has been an issue
12 raised by our Mayor about clustering. And I
13 believe, and I think, that that is against the
14 Federal Housing Law, in terms of impacting a
15 neighborhood with any one group of people.

16 And I would like for you to respond
17 to that.

18 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: A couple of
19 issues.

20 One is that President Clinton had a
21 task force that did a lot of work on this issue.
22 And as part of that, what we now understand -- which
23 I think all of us kind of would understand just
24 through common sense -- is that the aggregation of
25 poverty is more devastating to the families involved

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2 than the individual, isolated circumstance of
3 someone being impoverished.

4 That is to say that, when you create
5 a situation where you compound the difficulties that
6 come from a life without a great deal of resources
7 in a particular location, you create more synergy to
8 some of the negative outcomes of that.

9 And so it is not useful, nor would it
10 be in keeping with the approach of the federal
11 government.

12 The approach of the federal
13 government is one that I have articulated for a long
14 time, which is that we need to move away from
15 continuing to build, for instance, high-rise public
16 housing for families. That's totally to the side
17 now.

18 We are moving to try to create
19 situations where families, first of all, would not
20 be stigmatized by whoever their landlord may be.

21 You have plenty of families in
22 Philadelphia who meet -- who have the same level of
23 poverty as families who are currently served by
24 Section 8, who live in neighborhoods. And they need
25 services just as much as those who may have a

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2 Section 8 certificate.

3 We need to focus supportive services
4 on communities in need and on families in need. We
5 have to be very careful not to further exacerbate
6 these problems as we go forward.

7 And that we have plenty of examples
8 of families who, notwithstanding their income, have
9 been leaders in their community. Whether it is in
10 the anti-drug effort or as block captains or in a
11 whole host of things that we have all seen.

12 So there are issues we need to deal
13 with, I think you are right. But I think we need to
14 be careful as we go about it.

15 And I don't think that any effort to
16 aggregate families under Section 8 or any other type
17 of subsidy program is an appropriate way for us to
18 go with families with small children.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I agree with
20 Councilman Kenney. We need the Turnkey III program
21 because it brings about --

22 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: I do want to say
23 one thing on that, but I will tag it on to my answer
24 to my Councilman's question. I would not want to
25 delay his opportunity to speak.

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Well, I would just
3 want Councilwoman Verna, who hasn't spoken yet.

4 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Thank you,
5 Chairman.

6 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Congressman, I
7 want to thank you for coming in and for your
8 testimony. And I was delighted to hear you say that
9 the Section 8 program was not designed for rich
10 landlords.

11 I very quickly went through a list of
12 ownership for some of the Section 8s in my
13 district.

14 There is one owner -- who doesn't
15 live in the city, incidentally -- who owns 29
16 Section 8 properties and owes approximately \$42,341
17 in city taxes.

18 And looking over the records, I see
19 what his scam is. He buys a property in 1990, pays
20 the taxes in 1990, and hasn't paid taxes since.

21 But, in the meantime, it is a Section
22 8 property, and he is gaining all of the benefits.
23 And if he lives out of the city, all he is doing is
24 collecting the check.

25 I am sure he never goes to the

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2 property, he doesn't know what condition it is in.

3 And I don't think it is fair to the tenants, it is
4 not fair to the city, and --

5 (Voice from audience)

6 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: -- and I think
7 as you are reviewing some of the issues surrounding
8 Section 8 -- and this, I assume, is more of a city
9 problem -- but at the same time I think that when
10 somebody owns 29 properties under Section 8 and
11 doesn't pay any of the taxes, something is radically
12 wrong.

13 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: I don't think
14 anyone who is not current in the city taxes should
15 be allowed to have rental receipts from the federal
16 government for Section 8.

17 So I agree with you that -- I mean,
18 most of the problems related to Section 8 has to do
19 with, at least from a federal concern, has to do
20 with the landlords and has to do with, you know, the
21 fact that we need to have a tighter program.

22 The problem is that the
23 administration of the program is left in the hands
24 of local housing authorities, many of which in our
25 largest cities have had difficulty dealing with

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2 their own inventory of housing.

3 So I think that part of what we're
4 searching for, and through this new legislation that
5 was recently signed into law, is a better approach
6 to have the administration of program more strongly
7 adhered to.

8 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: Great.

9 And I certainly want to agree with my
10 colleagues about the supportive services and also
11 the Turnkey. I think that would be very, very
12 helpful.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Do we understand
15 they are not even supposed to get a Certificate of
16 Occupancy, the landlord, if he is behind in rent?

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The city is lax,
18 too, in not administering.

19 COUNCILWOMAN VERNA: That's what I am
20 saying. I think it is more of a city problem than
21 it is the federal government.

22 But I think there has to be some very
23 rigid regulations. I mean, if the man lives out of
24 the city --

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: What they need

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2 is enforcement, Councilwoman.

3 COUNCILWOMAN Verna: I understand
4 that very readily.

5 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
6 much.

7 Councilman Nutter.

8 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chairman.

10 Congressman, just as a followup to
11 Councilwoman Tasco, I had also planned to ask you
12 about the much discussed, somewhat unusual and
13 bizarre idea that we would go into a clustering
14 policy.

15 I recall that you were slightly ahead
16 of your time on the issue of getting rid of the
17 large, high-rise units, at a time when everyone else
18 said that we should either maintain them or keep
19 going in that direction. You took on that
20 particular issue.

21 I would only ask, it is reported, I
22 believe, in today's or yesterday's newspaper that
23 the Mayor is now possibly asking Congressman Borski
24 to propose new regulations that would allow more of
25 this clustering idea.

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2 I would only ask that you share your
3 particular perspective and views with Congressman
4 Borski. We do not need to go in that area.

5 And, quite honestly, if the
6 Administration thought enough of the issue, they
7 would have people here today so we would have some
8 legitimate discussion. Not force you, although you
9 handle yourself fine, but not force you to try to
10 respond to an issue that was clearly created by
11 them.

12 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Let me say a
13 couple of things.

14 One is that I had a conversation with
15 Congressman Borski who is very, very concerned about
16 this issue.

17 The totality of that conversation was
18 this issue of the fair market rental rate. And I
19 think that is a very legitimate issue, and is one I
20 am willing to work with him on.

21 Because I do think it is
22 inappropriate for landlords to be able to receive,
23 you know, in some cases twice as much as they would
24 ordinarily have been able to receive for the rental
25 of a unit.

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2 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Congressman, I
3 wanted to ask you, do you know, how is that even
4 possible, since there is a regulation and a
5 definition in the Code of Federal Regulations, in
6 982, on what a fair market value is?

7 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Obviously, with
8 all the attention that's been focused on how to make
9 sure that poor people don't, you know, cheat various
10 systems that are designed to help them, very little
11 has ever been done to figure out what we do about,
12 as Councilwoman Verna has said, those who are very
13 well off, who have figured out how to steal billions
14 of dollars from these same systems.

15 And whether we are talking about
16 Welfare or a Section 8, people have been found to
17 have been ingenious and very creative in figuring
18 out ways to scheme these programs.

19 But, nonetheless, I think that it
20 gets to the issue that I raised in response to
21 Councilwoman Tasco, which is that I think we really
22 need to look for a different tool to administer the
23 program at a community level.

24 And I think that we have, in our
25 city, very capable community development

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2 corporations that have been set up either as
3 adjuncts to churches or other programs, and which
4 have been very involved in the creation of
5 affordable housing in communities. We worked
6 together on a very important housing matter in our
7 own community.

8 There are a lot of people who at the
9 neighborhood level care about the housing stock,
10 care about making sure that there are good, quality
11 people who are able to rent or own in their
12 communities, and should be involved in that.

13 So let me just say, finally, that I
14 wanted to comment on the home ownership issue.

15 We worked with -- and it has been
16 announced now -- a major program by Fannie Mae to
17 encourage home ownership.

18 What most people pay in rent, they
19 could be paying in a mortgage. And what it means is
20 that they have to have the counseling and the
21 supportive services to make sure that they can
22 improve their credit-worthiness in terms of their
23 credit reports, and that they save up enough money.

24 The Pew Foundation has been working
25 with Kromer's office here in the city. And we have

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2 Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Congressman, for being
3 here today.

4 I just wanted to follow up on
5 Councilwoman Verna's issue on how an individual
6 could be doing business in Philadelphia and owing
7 40, 50 thousand dollars on the Section 8 rental
8 properties. Or for any business, for that matter.

9 We do have in the city -- and, again,
10 I think it is probably the city's problem, more so
11 than the federal government, although I think we can
12 work out a system of notification.

13 As you may know, before an individual
14 in the City of Philadelphia is permitted to operate
15 a bar or a restaurant with a liquor license, they
16 must first show the Pennsylvania Liquor Control
17 Board that all of their taxes that were due in the
18 City of Philadelphia have in fact been paid. And
19 that's in a written statement.

20 Any business, for that matter, would
21 need to show the city before a license was issued
22 for a luncheonette, a corner grocery store, that you
23 have not -- you are not in arrears with any taxes
24 due the city before a license is issued. So those
25 kinds of mechanisms are in place.

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2 I think what we may need to do is
3 talk to the appropriate city agencies or city
4 department, maybe it is L & I, who work out a
5 similar flagging mechanism to let the people at HUD
6 know that, A, Mr. So-And-So owes X amount of taxes,
7 therefore HUD should not issue a license, or
8 whatever it is that is issued, the Section 8
9 certificate, for the purpose of doing business in
10 the City of Philadelphia.

11 And I think that's very easily done.
12 And that should help us in a way.

13 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: Let me assure
14 you that my office would be willing to work with the
15 appropriate authorities here in the Council to
16 ensure that HUD would give every consideration to
17 working with the city on such a program.

18 Landlords who are receiving rental
19 payments under Section 8 should be the first to make
20 sure that their taxes are paid.

21 These taxes go to support our school
22 system and to make sure that there is adequate fire
23 and police protection and other city services.

24 They would not be able to rent these
25 buildings out unless these services were available.

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2 So they should be the first to make sure that they
3 would be appropriately paying what is part of their
4 civic rent here in the City of Philadelphia.

5 So thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Congressman, as you
7 are leaving, I would like to express thanks for your
8 coming in, and urge you to try to convince HUD that
9 there are two bodies, different bodies, in the City
10 of Philadelphia that constitute the government. One
11 is the Mayor, and the other is the City Council.

12 And the City Council believes that it
13 would have the right to expect HUD to cooperate with
14 it, as well as with the Mayor. And we would just
15 urge --

16 CONGRESSMAN FATTAH: As someone who
17 has been a legislator and who serves in the
18 Congress -- we are a co-equal branch of the federal
19 government -- I understand that the legislative body
20 here is, indeed, very important.

21 And that HUD, I think, at least by
22 the laws that we passed in the Congress, would
23 require in all of our programs -- and we need to
24 continue to do so -- that the Council act on any
25 application for federal funds from HUD, and not just

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2 that the Mayor would apply for them.

3 So I think that in keeping with the
4 spirit of that, that in Section 8, and in any other
5 federal program, the legislators who represent the
6 people of this city, who have been elected in these
7 districts and citywide, your voice should be heard.

8 And I would just hope that as we go
9 forward, that we can calm some of the unfortunate
10 rhetoric, and focus in on the substance.

11 Because in every community, whether
12 it is an African-American, Hispanic community, or a
13 majority white community, none of us want to have
14 people in communities who are not going to be
15 productive and active citizens.

16 But at the same right, we have to be
17 very, very careful that we do not infringe upon
18 people's Constitutional rights.

19 Because then we will have to, as a
20 federal government, make sure that, as we have had
21 in the past, that people do have a right to live
22 anywhere that they desire to live.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN COHEN: We thank you very,
25 very much.

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2 (Applause.)

3 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Ladies and
4 gentlemen, I would please ask that all conversation
5 please cease or be taken into the hallway. Thank
6 you very much.

7 Please identify yourself for the
8 record and proceed with your testimony.

9 DR. WILLIAM YANCEY: I am William
10 Yancey, Professor of Sociology at Temple
11 University.

12 I am here today to talk about three
13 issues. One is the concentration of poverty and its
14 consequences. And from statements that the
15 Councilmen already made, as well as the Congressman,
16 that may not be necessary.

17 Secondly it is to talk about Section
18 8 housing and its distribution across the city.

19 And, finally, to talk about some
20 research we have just done concerning neighborhood
21 change and housing values.

22 There is at least 40 years of social
23 science research that has demonstrated repeatedly
24 that being poor hurts in many different ways.

25 But that same research has already

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2 shown that when you concentrate groups of people who
3 are poor in single spaces, or small spaces, that
4 pain that's associated with poverty is in fact
5 exacerbated.

6 We have been conducting research over
7 the last five years on education in cities around
8 the United States.

9 And one of the strongest findings
10 that we observe in every city that we have seen is
11 that schools that are characterized by high
12 concentrations of low-income students in fact have
13 difficulty getting those students to achieve
14 academically.

15 We see those same kinds of results
16 over and over, indicating that concentrations of
17 poverty is bad public policy.

18 Section 8 is a program that, in fact,
19 works exactly the opposite way.

20 What's on the screen here -- and some
21 of you may have copies of -- are maps that we have
22 made that describe the distribution of Section 8
23 housing across the city.

24 These are different from the map that
25 you have already seen in two important ways.

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2 One is that the areas of this map are
3 by census tracts, rather than zip codes. And,
4 secondly, rather than simply counting the number of
5 Section 8 housing units in each tract, we have
6 calculated the percent of housing in each tract
7 across the city that is Section 8.

8 Looking at this map, you can see
9 fairly clearly two things.

10 One is that Section 8 is everywhere.
11 At the same time, there are some neighborhoods where
12 it is more concentrated than in others. It is,
13 indeed, spread across the city.

14 If you ask the question, what's the
15 characteristic of neighborhoods that appear to have
16 more Section 8, there are really two answers to
17 that.

18 One is that they are neighborhoods
19 that in one form or another exhibited symptoms of
20 decline.

21 And second is that they are
22 neighborhoods where the average family income is
23 lower than the average across the city.

24 A third thing -- and this is really
25 illustrated better in the second and third overheads

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2 that are there -- what's on the board is a map
3 showing rates of poverty, or poverty across the City
4 of Philadelphia.

5 And I think you can see one is in
6 North and West Philadelphia, there are relatively
7 high concentrations of poor people who are
8 African-American.

9 Immediately to the right of that
10 shading and the green dots are fairly high
11 concentrations of people who are Latino and poor.

12 And spread, really, across this map
13 are people who are white and poor.

14 This distribution of low income
15 across the city turns out to be closely associated
16 with the distribution of Section 8 housing.

17 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Professor, could
18 you please give us an idea as to the income levels
19 of the individuals you are talking about as you
20 regard as poor or none?

21 Is there a certain threshold of
22 income that you are talking about?

23 DR. YANCEY: Sure. Right.

24 The poverty level is determined by
25 the Department of Agriculture, in fact. I don't

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2 know exactly what the numbers are.

3 I think for a family of four in 1996
4 was something like \$16,000 a year. I should get
5 those sort of rounded numbers.

6 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: If you know and if
7 you could get them for us, we would appreciate it.

8 If you know, fine. If you could get
9 them for us, we would appreciate it.

10 DR. YANCEY: I can surely get them
11 for you.

12 But what the Agriculture Department
13 does is say, how much does a family need to house
14 itself, to feed itself, to clothe its children, and
15 so forth.

16 And these are families that don't
17 have sufficient income, in fact, to do those
18 things.

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Can you get us
20 that data?

21 DR. YANCEY: Sure. Absolutely.

22 If you look at this map, which is
23 Section 8 housing, and compare that to the one
24 before -- you can't do that, really, on the screen
25 because they look alike -- but, in fact, that's the

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2 really from the census. And the last census is
3 1990. So it is impossible to answer the question
4 that we have been asked to answer.

5 We have data now in 1996 and '97 from
6 the Housing Authority. And to say, okay, what
7 effect has that had on housing values, would require
8 that we get later data on housing values in the
9 city.

10 But what we did do is examine change
11 in housing values across Philadelphia from 1980 to
12 1990. And to do this, asking the question of,
13 what's the effect of the racial composition and
14 racial change of neighborhoods on change in housing
15 values.

16 It was first necessary to classify
17 neighborhoods in the city. This is somewhat
18 smaller. You don't have a picture of that in your
19 hands.

20 But what it shows is the distribution
21 of Latino and African-American populations across
22 Philadelphia. This is 1990 data.

23 There are large black neighborhoods
24 in North and West Philadelphia, highly concentrated
25 Latino neighborhood in North Philadelphia. And, for

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2 were integrated and became predominantly black over
3 the period.

4 There is one neighborhood that we
5 have labeled here "Gentry," just south, in South
6 Philadelphia -- can you point it out down there? --
7 where, in fact, racial change has been in the
8 opposite direction from the general trend, so that
9 white populations are displacing the black
10 population that was there before.

11 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: A higher income?

12 DR. YANCEY: It is becoming whiter.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But what's the
14 income level?

15 DR. YANCEY: That's the next
16 question.

17 If we then look at the housing values
18 that are associated with these -- you don't have a
19 slide -- neighborhoods, what happens is you get the
20 following results.

21 One is that housing in the city that
22 is older, somewhat surprisingly, is associated with
23 more stable and positive housing values.

24 Secondly, it turns out that
25 neighborhoods that are predominantly black and have

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2 secure the value of your house and you're white, the
3 best thing to do is to talk your neighbors into
4 selling their house to a member of a minority, and
5 then make sure that your neighborhood remains
6 integrated.

7 All of this reminds me of a novel by
8 Ralph Ellison where he describes life in Mississippi
9 in the 1930's, and how the men would seek
10 entertainment, entertain themselves by throwing
11 dimes in the dirt to the kids. And the kids would
12 fight over the dimes, and that was great sport.

13 What we're seeing in the city is
14 large, large areas of communities who are feeling
15 real pain because of the changing economic structure
16 of the city.

17 What we're seeing in the fight over
18 Section 8 is kids fighting over dimes, when, in
19 fact, the real issue is the change in the economy of
20 the city. And these groups, rather than fighting,
21 should obviously be getting together.

22 And I am pleased that the Council is
23 clearly directing themselves to this broader issue
24 of economic structure and not allowing us to
25 continue to be kids fighting in the dirt.

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2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very much
4 for your testimony.

5 Your data and your discussion
6 relative to census tracts and home ownership --
7 census tracts and poverty issues, are they generally
8 related to home ownership?

9 Are these properties that you are
10 talking about owned by the resident, or are they
11 rental properties? I am trying to figure out. Or
12 is it a mix?

13 DR. YANCEY: Well --

14 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: The conclusion that
15 you made relative to integrated neighborhoods,
16 ensuring a rising property value and a more stable,
17 conducive environment for social interaction -- I
18 think that's what you basically believe --

19 DR. YANCEY: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: -- is that based on
21 the issue of home ownership or is it a mix of rental
22 and ownership?

23 DR. YANCEY: These are owner
24 occupied, the value of owner-occupied housing.

25 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Councilman DiCicco,

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2 not to be rude, because we were listening, but we
3 were talking about a neighborhood -- and I want to
4 recognize him -- because the neighborhood where he
5 lives, which is a couple of streets over from where
6 I live, has been integrated for 100 years and does
7 experience exactly what you were talking about. And
8 I will turn it over to him in a minute.

9 But the issue is -- and I think this
10 is what is important -- the more we foster the
11 opportunities for home ownership, the more likely we
12 have the opportunity to integrate stably and improve
13 our property values for everyone.

14 So, Councilman DiCicco.

15 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you.

16 And I have said this, or made this
17 argument in my community for years, that my
18 community in South Philadelphia has always been a
19 racially integrated community.

20 Some of the black families that are
21 there are third and fourth generation were actually
22 there before some of the white families.

23 And I have always found that to be a
24 very healthy environment in which to live. Because
25 the world, as we know, is made up of people of all

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2 colors. And I have encouraged people to make
3 investments in my community.

4 The problem I think that I see, I
5 know we are focusing on Section 8 properties -- and
6 I am not to suggest that everyone will be able to
7 afford a home, or that everyone would like to even
8 own a home.

9 Some people find it more economically
10 convenient to rent, because they don't want to have
11 the responsibility of maintaining a home.

12 But the problems that I experience in
13 my community, which is an integrated community, all
14 kinds of income levels, third, fourth generation of
15 black, white, Hispanic, and now there is an Asian
16 influence, is rental properties in particular who
17 are owned by people who are basically absentee
18 landlords and have no regard for the community in
19 which they own properties of which they make money
20 on.

21 And I think that -- again, I
22 appreciate the concern for Section 8 -- but I think
23 that that is really one of the problems as relates
24 to rental properties in the city and the way in
25 which landlords maintain the property and/or screen

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2 zip code below Jimmy and I, there is one realtor,
3 speculator, whatever you want to call him, that owns
4 200 properties. Primarily they are Section 8. He
5 lives in Bala Cynwyd. He is just sucking the
6 system.

7 So what's happening is, the
8 taxpayers, people who go to work, pay taxes, I don't
9 think they are necessarily upset that someone in
10 need is being given a helping hand.

11 I think the problem is when they walk
12 out of their house in the morning and they find that
13 people who are living in a particular home and not
14 paying the rent, but their tax dollars, the guy
15 going to work, his tax dollars or her tax dollars
16 are paying for that person to live in there, that
17 they would like a person to be more responsible
18 about the condition of the property.

19 Because that does have an impact on
20 property values. And that could have a very
21 negative impact on property values. And it becomes
22 less attractive in a community for people to either
23 want to stay in or move to.

24 So I don't know necessarily that it
25 is the other issues that are kind of underlying

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2 here, but, like, people are kind of hesitant to talk
3 about. I think it is more the issue of the
4 economics, in my opinion.

5 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very
6 much.

7 And just finally, before we let you
8 go, one of the saddest parts about this whole
9 discussion for me -- and this was raised by
10 Congressman Fattah -- is that if we agree or
11 stipulate to an average monthly price for Section 8
12 housing, say even if we are going to say six or
13 seven hundred dollars a month, just think of the
14 mortgage that that money could pay for, as opposed
15 to going into the pocket of a landlord who lives out
16 of town.

17 Think about the ability for that
18 tenant to be applying those dollars to a mortgage
19 from a building and loan or a savings bank for
20 ultimate potential home ownership. Think about all
21 the other people we would be able to help.

22 I mean, if the average mortgage
23 price, the mortgage cost monthly, is 400, 500
24 dollars a month, and we are giving landlords six and
25 seven hundred dollars a month for rental, just think

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2 about how many more people we could serve in a more
3 stable way by applying those payments to a mortgage,
4 as opposed to a rental payment.

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And I think that
6 really needs to be emphasized even more.

7 Not all landlords, be it if they are
8 landlords for Section 8 or just straight-out rental
9 units, are irresponsible. There are many, good
10 responsible landlords.

11 In fact, Felicia from the 300 block
12 of Dickinson testified to that, that her landlord is
13 a good person.

14 But what is happening now is, I
15 remember growing up as a kid, I always heard the
16 expression about block-busting. A lot of these
17 landlords, speculators, are using now government
18 funds.

19 They are taking our taxpayers'
20 dollars and using that for the purpose of
21 block-busting. And there is no penalty for that;
22 there is no control over that.

23 So I think we really need to look at
24 the legislation. And Congressman Fattah I think is
25 right on target with moving towards home ownership

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2 and applying some of that money, maybe taking some
3 money that is collected by a landlord into an escrow
4 fund, or something of that nature, to eventually
5 allow that person who is renting that property to
6 become a property owner, and to move forward and
7 really become an integral part of that community.

8 But, again, many of these
9 landlords -- and I know because I see it in my
10 community -- are just using what is in existence
11 today as a means of not only making money, because
12 that's okay, but they are using that as a way of
13 block-busting.

14 This one person I speak to has about
15 20 properties now on one given block, and has
16 literally allowed those properties, the first one or
17 two that he purchased, to deteriorate to create that
18 condition on that block so that people start to feel
19 hopeless and lose pride and hope in their community,
20 put up their signs, and the prices are being driven
21 down.

22 He buys them up, and now he has 20
23 properties, which he is getting anywhere between 650
24 and 850 dollars a month for rent. When, prior to
25 that, those properties may have probably qualified

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2 for maybe \$400 a month in rent, because an
3 individual had to pay the rent and was not
4 subsidized.

5 So I think we all lose. I think the
6 tenant probably loses even more than the people in
7 the community. Well, eventually everybody loses.
8 But I think the tenant is being used. And I think
9 we really need to start getting after the
10 landlords.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you,
13 Professor. I am very glad that you have been here.

14 I think the issue of clustering and
15 ghettoizing poor people is bad public policy. It
16 has been bad public policy.

17 I am glad you have made that clear,
18 as I have heard it before, with maps and with
19 economic substantiation of that.

20 So I am very glad. These hearings
21 are going very well. Thank you for coming.

22 Terry Gillen.

23 Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Just to go off

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2 on another subject, if I can.

3 The briefing on the
4 telecommunications legislation is still on for today
5 at 3 o'clock. I believe it will be in the Caucus
6 Room. So either a Councilperson or your
7 representative might want to be there at 3 o'clock.
8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Miss Gillen,
10 identify yourself for the record.

11 MS. TERRY GILLEN: Thank you. Terry
12 Gillen, G-I-L-L-E-N.

13 Members of City Council, thank you
14 for inviting me to testify today. I know that time
15 is short, so I will be brief.

16 In many ways I feel as if I started
17 all of this with an Op Ed that I wrote in the
18 Inquirer last August.

19 I wrote that Op Ed because my father
20 grew up in Grays Ferry and I have family there. On
21 my cousin's block, they have 12 Section 8 houses.

22 I tried to get PHA to help the
23 residents of that block with the problems they were
24 facing, such as noise and trash, but could not get a
25 satisfactory response from PHA. So that's why I

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2 wrote my Op Ed. It obviously struck a chord
3 throughout the city.

4 I want to clarify two points that
5 sometimes have been taken out of context from my Op
6 Ed.

7 First, I did not say, nor would I
8 ever say, that there is no racism in Grays Ferry.
9 It is a historical fact that a faction of white
10 residents in Grays Ferry have been intimidating and
11 harassing blacks there since before the Civil War.
12 It certainly did not start with Section 8 housing.

13 However, we should not allow our
14 focus on Section 8 to prevent us from addressing the
15 very real problems of racism.

16 However, neither should we allow the
17 reality of racism to prevent us from focusing on the
18 Section 8 program. Both areas need work.

19 Rather, my point was that Section 8
20 issues are often about class conflicts and clashes
21 between cultures, middle class and working class
22 culture versus the culture of poverty and
23 homelessness.

24 If PHA did a better job of addressing
25 these conflicts, it would help to eliminate one

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2 reason for racial antagonism in Grays Ferry. The
3 racism would still exist, but this could help.

4 The problem in many neighborhoods
5 that have large numbers of Section 8 houses is the
6 lack of what sociologist William Julius Wilson calls
7 social organization. He defines this as the ability
8 of residents to maintain effective social control.

9 When the informal networks that bind
10 people in most neighborhoods do not exist, then the
11 government should help by creating more formal
12 networks; through block meetings, for example. This
13 is what I believe PHA has failed to do in this
14 neighborhood.

15 My second clarification is that I am
16 not suggesting that scattered site housing for the
17 poor has failed. In my opinion, we have not done a
18 very good job in this city of managing the scattered
19 site housing program.

20 But that is a failure of commitment
21 and management. It does not mean that we should
22 abandon scattered site housing or move to a cluster
23 approach.

24 Instead, we should dedicate ourselves
25 to doing a better job of managing Section 8

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2 housing. We could do this this in a number of
3 neighbors.

4 For example, we could do a better job
5 of preparing tenants to move into middle-class
6 environments, explaining about noise regulations and
7 curfews.

8 Second, we could improve community
9 policing relationships, including sanitation, police
10 involvement, on blocks where people may simply not
11 know when to put out the trash.

12 Third, the city could work with HUD
13 to find ways to limit the concentration of Section 8
14 houses in blocks that are in danger of losing
15 middle-class residents.

16 And, finally, PHA should hold Section
17 8 landlords strictly accountable for the conditions
18 of their properties.

19 Those are the two points that I
20 wanted to make, and I would be pleased to answer any
21 questions that you may have.

22 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Miss Gillen, one
23 question.

24 The issue of clustering and of what I
25 call ghettoizing, that, in your opinion, is bad

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2 public policy?

3 MS. GILLEN: Yes. Yes, I think it is
4 bad public policy for the reasons that the previous
5 person testified and for reasons that you yourself
6 stated earlier, that it has just historically been
7 proven not to address the problems of poverty.

8 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Right.

9 So the essence of the testimony is
10 that we need to really look at the management of a
11 program, not at the program itself and in terms of
12 its value.

13 But that the problems with Section 8
14 have come from, in essence, management processes
15 that have not been implemented.

16 MS. GILLEN: I think there are two
17 problems. One is the management issues that I
18 discussed. And the second are larger issues that I
19 think HUD needs to address.

20 I think the questions of spreading
21 Section 8 evenly throughout all neighborhoods is a
22 national problem.

23 I mean, there is a Congressman in
24 Chicago who looked at the issue last year, proposed
25 legislation.

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2 I think we ought to be working with
3 HUD and with members of the Congressional
4 delegations in other cities to look at ways that we
5 can get either the HUD regulations or HUD laws
6 changed to address some of these issues.

7 They are larger policy issues that
8 this city will not be able to address by itself.

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But the initial
10 philosophy of the program contains that very aspect
11 in it, that we should integrate the Section 8
12 holders throughout the city.

13 MS. GILLEN: That's correct.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: So that's already
15 within it. Whether it is being applied or not that
16 is something else.

17 MS. GILLEN: That is correct. I
18 agree.

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you very
20 much.

21 Any other questions?

22 MS. GILLEN: Thank you.

23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: George Gould, Liz
24 Hersh.

25 And next after that will be William

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2 Seaward and Virginia Chaney. Okay.

3 Thank you, and identify yourself for
4 the record, please.

5 MS. HERSH: My name is Liz Hersh. I
6 am the Executive Director of the Tenants' Action
7 Group.

8 MR. GOULD: My name is George Gould.
9 I am the managing attorney of the Housing Unit at
10 Community Legal Service, and also the Tenants'
11 Action Group.

12 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You have both been
13 here before. So, Liz.

14 MS. LIZ HERSH: Thank you,
15 Councilman.

16 Good afternoon. I think it is
17 afternoon now. I am Liz Hersh, Executive Director
18 of the Tenants Action Group. And I am here today on
19 behalf of TAG to speak in support of the Section 8
20 program.

21 TAG was founded in 1973 to advocate
22 for safety and affordable rental housing. Last year
23 we served 20,000 people through our tenant hotline,
24 self-help programs, housing counseling, homelessness
25 prevention and rental assistance services. I have

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2 seven points I want to make.

3 Number one, we all benefit from
4 government subsidies for our housing. I think it
5 has been said before, it should be said again.
6 Homeowners get the largest single housing subsidy in
7 this country, and that's the mortgage tax
8 deduction.

9 Number two, Section 8 exists for a
10 reason. It addresses a very real problem, which is
11 that we don't have enough affordable housing in this
12 city, and many people can't afford to pay the rent.
13 Without Section 8, we would have much more
14 homelessness.

15 Let me give you some facts.

16 Even with the minimum wage at 5.15 an
17 hour, a worker has to earn 250 percent of the
18 minimum wage, or 13.25 an hour, to afford a
19 two-bedroom apartment at what HUD considers to be a
20 fair market rent of 689 a month.

21 It takes an hourly wage of at least
22 10.73, or 208 percent of minimum wage, to afford a
23 one bedroom at the fair market rent of 558 a month.

24 50 percent of all renters pay more
25 than half of their income -- that means one of their

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2 two paychecks a month -- for housing alone. 70
3 percent pay more than 30 percent of their income on
4 rent.

5 Pennsylvanians pay some of the
6 highest utility rates in the country. And
7 low-income families often pay as much as 30 percent
8 of their income on utilities.

9 Recent research shows that utility
10 shutoffs precipitated 25 percent of all shelter
11 admissions.

12 Many low-income renter households are
13 so poor that their entire incomes are insufficient
14 to pay for a decent place to live.

15 And in Pennsylvania, 40 percent of
16 all renter families are unable to afford a
17 one-bedroom apartment, 48 percent are unable to
18 afford a two-bedroom.

19 This means that renter families,
20 without housing assistance such as Section 8, are
21 forced to forego other necessities such as food,
22 clothing, and medical care, just to pay the rent.

23 Since 1983, the private rental market
24 for affordable housing has shrunk by more than 20
25 percent, and landlords very often cannot afford to

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2 8 is a program that benefits the private rental
3 market. It makes it possible for private landlords
4 to stay in business in Philadelphia.

5 Without it, we would have more
6 disinvestment and more housing abandonment.

7 Similarly, increased emphasis on clusters will put
8 mom-and-pop property managers out of business.

9 As a tenants' rights advocate, it is
10 very unusual for me to stand before you and say that
11 landlords need Section 8.

12 And certainly we need good landlords,
13 and we need to hold landlords accountable. I am so
14 glad to hear people besides us talking about slum
15 landlords and opportunistic landlords.

16 But there are good landlords in this
17 program, and there are landlords who depend on this
18 program.

19 One landlord who I spoke with, who
20 was unable to attend today because of the kind of
21 scheduling conflicts here, said that he, quite
22 simply, would not be in business without Section 8.

23 His observation is that people can't
24 afford the rent, and that he would not be able to
25 command the rents he needs to stay in business.

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2 point?

3 MS. HERSH: Well, for instance, the
4 cost of shelter for one night for one person is
5 \$11. So that means, for a month for a family of
6 three, it is about \$1,080, and for a year it would
7 be \$13,000 a year.

8 I multiplied that by 11,000. And it
9 seemed to me the tab for sheltering all those people
10 would be half a billion dollars.

11 And if only half of the Section 8
12 people were to become homeless, the tab for the city
13 to shelter them would still be about \$70 million.

14 So that means that even if 25 percent
15 of the people who currently get Section 8 were to
16 become homeless, it would cost about \$35 million to
17 shelter them.

18 In other words, we simply could not
19 afford to do it. We would be looking at a situation
20 of tent cities and homeless people in even larger
21 numbers.

22 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We could close
23 recreation centers; we could close the libraries, we
24 could close all these other programs and so on --

25 MS. HERSH: Churches and schools.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: -- and pay that
3 out.

4 MS. HERSH: Well, true.

5 Section 8 is a very effective program
6 in breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty
7 for people.

8 I could give you 100 stories of
9 people who have come through our transitional
10 housing program and gone into Section 8 whose lives
11 are now dramatically different.

12 One of my favorite stories is Sandy,
13 who was in the shelter for a long time. She is in
14 Section 8 now. Her kids are doing great. She is
15 working two full-time jobs. Still has no benefits
16 because they are both considered to be temporary
17 jobs.

18 But she has managed to get herself
19 off of Welfare. Her kids are doing great, she is
20 doing great but she still can't afford to live
21 without Section 8.

22 Marlena, who is another one who has
23 come out of our program. She used the time that she
24 was into Section 8 to get job training. She now has
25 a good job and is making some money.

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2 But for people that come out of
3 homelessness, it takes time to rebound, to take care
4 of credit problems, to get your utilities back on
5 track, to get your family stabilized, to get set up
6 in a community. It takes time. And Section 8
7 really helps to stabilize people.

8 I guess the one thing that I would
9 say is that, if it were possible for people who need
10 services to get services while they are in Section
11 8, I think that that would be a good thing.

12 I don't think that they should be
13 inflicted upon people who are doing well. But if
14 people need help, we ought to provide them the help
15 that they need.

16 Sixth point. Clustering people in
17 Section 8, I think, is just a dumb idea.
18 Clustering, I think, as many people have said, is
19 dumb. It is a failed public policy. I think to
20 replicate a failed public policy is dumb.

21 In addition, I think it is
22 discriminatory. I think it violates Civil Rights
23 law.

24 And I think that we should be moving
25 to integrate our communities and build on the

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2 wonderful diversity that we have in the city, and
3 not to further segregate people.

4 And my final point is that I do agree
5 that Section 8 needs to be reformed.

6 As a housing provider and advocate, I
7 could probably tell you a lot of stories about some
8 of the problems with Section 8.

9 There clearly needs to be tighter
10 control, tighter administration, better inspection
11 process, case management for people who need it.

12 This program ought to work better
13 than it does.

14 At the Tenants' Action Group we run a
15 rent subsidy and housing counseling program that
16 doesn't have a lot of the problems that this program
17 has, and that's because it is very closely
18 monitored.

19 And I don't think that there is any
20 reason why this program can't be more responsive to
21 people's concerns, and still accomplish its basic
22 goal.

23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Any questions?

24 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I have one,
25 Mr. Chairman.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Councilman
3 Mariano.

4 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Miss Hersh, to
5 sum it up in a nutshell, this program should work a
6 lot better than it does. Explain that to me.

7 I mean, it obviously doesn't work.
8 Because there are people down here on both sides
9 that are for and some are against.

10 And, by the way, I agree with you,
11 the program should work. But could you explain to
12 everybody here what you meant by that?

13 MS. HERSH: That it should work?

14 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Did you say it
15 doesn't?

16 MS. HERSH: No. I think it does
17 work.

18 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Because your
19 group monitors the people you put in it; is that
20 what you are telling me?

21 MS. HERSH: No. We run a comparable
22 type of program, only for a much shorter term.

23 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: But you monitor
24 that.

25 MS. HERSH: Yes. We have monthly

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2 contact. We make home visits. People have case
3 management where they have weekly contact, they have
4 a plan for making some progress.

5 This is what we do.

6 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: And that's the
7 point I want to make.

8 See this empty chair, this could
9 represent the people from PHA that are not here
10 today. And we could ask this empty chair, why don't
11 they do that.

12 Because if you could do that with
13 your small program, maybe with some more funds or
14 money, maybe we could do that or PHA could do that,
15 and then we wouldn't be having all these problems.

16 I mean, we can sit here all day and
17 listen to the same testimonies over and over again.
18 Terry Gillen struck a point and you struck a point.
19 I am listening to this all.

20 It is a good program if they monitor
21 it. Who are we going to ask those questions?

22 Don't ask Ortiz, DiCicco, or
23 Mariano. Ask PHA, and they are not here.

24 So if you can do it at your level,
25 and I was working for PHA, and I was sitting over

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2 here in this seat, I would say, "Certainly,
3 Councilman, Miss Hersh, we could do it, if we had
4 enough money and enough people inspecting this
5 program." Right?

6 I mean, if I was the king of the
7 world and I said, "Liz, you are in charge of PHA
8 starting tomorrow" --

9 MS. HERSH: I would quit.

10 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Well, besides
11 that. Let's pretend you are a masochist and you
12 want to do this.

13 MS. HERSH: I am not a masochist.

14 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Let's pretend
15 you are.

16 You think you could do it, with the
17 right amount of funds, because the program works if
18 it is watched.

19 MS. HERSH: I think there are also
20 some regulatory barriers that have to be dealt with.

21 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Then we go to
22 the guys that pass the regulations.

23 There was a Congressman that was
24 sitting right there who is willing to help. There
25 is another Congressman that I talked to two days ago

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2 that's introducing legislation.

3 I mean, we see a problem, we take
4 time, we attack the problem. Nobody is here.

5 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But the essence,
6 Councilman, is not as the Mayor has asked
7 Congressman Borski to actually begin clustering
8 people. That is not the answer to Section 8.

9 The answer to Section 8 is to
10 continue -- and I think as Terry Gillen said
11 before -- to integrate the people in this city into
12 the neighborhoods, and to make sure that the
13 different governmental agencies do the job that they
14 are supposed to do.

15 I think there are some problems. But
16 overall do you believe the program is working, Liz?

17 MS. HERSH: Yes, I do. Our
18 experience is that it works very well.

19 I think there are problems. I think
20 the problems are fixable. I think they are largely
21 administrative. I think they should be fixed.

22 I mean, it can be a very frustrating
23 program to work with. And they ought to work more
24 closely with the city, with the shelter system, with
25 the Office of Housing, which currently is -- there

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2 really isn't the level of coordination that there
3 needs to be.

4 So I think we do need to make some
5 progress. I just want to make sure the baby doesn't
6 get tossed out with the bath water.

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I think we have
8 some bad landlords, but I think we have a great
9 majority of the landlords in the program who are
10 landlords that work very well with the program.

11 Is that your experience? Because you
12 have more experience in this than any of us here at
13 this table.

14 MS. HERSH: Our experience is that
15 there are good landlords.

16 And our experience is, also, when you
17 are paying the rent, you can command quality and
18 conformity from landlords.

19 All you have to do is say you are not
20 going to pay the rent or you are not going to send
21 them any more tenants. And you would be amazed at
22 how quickly they can get those repairs and get the
23 trash out on the right day, or whatever it is.

24 This isn't rocket science; this is
25 managing well.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Right.

3 Mr. Gould.

4 MR. GOULD: Let me just add a little

5 bit.

6 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Could you identify
7 yourself for the record.

8 MR. GEORGE GOULD: Yes. George with
9 Community Legal Services.

10 As Liz from the Tenant Action Group,
11 we have also been very involved with the Section 8
12 program.

13 And I really reiterate much of what
14 she has said, that the program is a very good
15 program, it has some problems, and they need to be
16 corrected.

17 Part of the problem, much of it has
18 already been mentioned. One of them is
19 inspections. They have very few inspections, and
20 often properties go uninspected.

21 And that, combined with problems with
22 our Department of License & Inspections, who also
23 should be inspecting these properties. These
24 properties are not --

25 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We know the

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2 problems of L & I.

3 MR. GOULD: These properties are not
4 immune to our local code enforcement system. We
5 have those problems.

6 We also have problems with
7 responsiveness of Administration or the agency who
8 handles Section 8. And sometimes it is difficult
9 just to get through to them to get answers to
10 questions.

11 And, as you mentioned, there are
12 problems with landlords. And I would agree, despite
13 the fact that we represent many of the tenants, that
14 there are problems with tenants.

15 But I think, given that, it is a very
16 important program. It gives people the opportunity
17 to live where they want, assuming they have a
18 landlord willing to participate in the program.

19 People have talked about social
20 services. I think as Liz has said, it is very
21 important that tenants be offered social services,
22 if they need them.

23 There has been a crying lack of real
24 social services for public housing tenants and for
25 tenants living in Section 8. And for those tenants

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2 good landlords who participate in the program. But
3 there are certainly landlords who are involved who
4 are just out to get the dollar and do not put
5 anything back into the property.

6 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I think what
7 people don't understand is around 1981, 1980,
8 myself, you, and other attorneys, we managed to put
9 one of those very bad Section 8 landlords in jail
10 because he was hustling monies off Section 8 of
11 tenants at Regent Street, up there.

12 MR. GOULD: Yes.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Do you remember
14 that property?

15 MR. GOULD: Yes. I remember it
16 well.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: So, in essence,
18 what we have is some managerial aspects that need to
19 be addressed, that need to be done.

20 And I think we can do it with PHA,
21 once we get them here. And they will be here.
22 Okay?

23 MS. HERSH: Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Any other
25 questions?

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2 MR. GOULD: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But clustering is
4 stupid.

5 MS. HERSH: You can quote me on
6 that.

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Willie Seaward,
8 Virginia Chaney.

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Please identify
10 yourself for the record.

11 MS. CHANEY: Virginia Chaney.

12 MR. SEAWARD: Willie Seaward,
13 President of HAPCO.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you. Who is
15 going first?

16 MR. SEAWARD: Ladies first in
17 America.

18 MS. CHANEY: Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Miss Chaney, you
20 can proceed.

21 MS. VIRGINIA CHANEY: I am disabled.
22 I got cerebral palsy. I am on a limited income. I
23 am in an apartment that I cannot afford. I pay 495,
24 plus utilities. And I only get 511.40 a month.

25 And I called Mr. Kenney's office. He

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2 told me to -- whoever works in the office with him
3 told me to apply for a Section 8 in a retirement
4 home and see if I could get Section 8 through
5 there. And I am only 28 years old.

6 And I don't think that's right, for a
7 handicapped person to be on a wait list for three
8 years so far to try and get on Section 8. I haven't
9 gotten on it yet. I don't think it is right that I
10 be on a wait list because I am handicapped.

11 I do have a 13-month-old child at
12 home, and I am on a limited income. I can't afford
13 my apartment. I need outside help from my family,
14 my friends, and so forth.

15 And I think Section 8 should be
16 available to people who really need it at this
17 time.

18 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We agree with
19 that.

20 MS. CHANEY: And I know there are a
21 lot of Russians on it that lives in my community.
22 And, I mean, I live in Little Russia. But that's
23 how I feel.

24 Because I live in Greater Northeast,
25 by George Washington High School. And before that I

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2 lived in a \$300 apartment, one bedroom. And I felt
3 like I was -- my landlord was a slumlord. Because
4 he doesn't even come out to inspect it for the two
5 years I was living there. I told him the roof was
6 leaking and this and that, and he never came out.

7 He sent someone else to fix it, and
8 they never fixed it. So now I am like, I moved out
9 of there, now I moved into something I really can't
10 afford. So I need Section 8.

11 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: What you are
12 expressing is what we have in this city. We have an
13 incredible housing need for moderate-income
14 individuals and for individuals such as yourself.
15 And obviously, you know, this program is supposed to
16 be there in order to do that.

17 Any help that we can give, besides
18 Councilman Kenney and myself and so on, will be
19 available to you. All right?

20 MS. CHANEY: Thank you.

21 MR. WILLIE SEAWARD: My name is
22 Willie Seaward.

23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Put it close to
24 you.

25 MR. WILLIAM SEAWARD: I am President

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2 of HAPCO. I represent some 3,000 landlords. A
3 dirty word, as I have been hearing this morning.

4 However, we must remember there are
5 good landlords, there are bad landlords. There are
6 good tenants, there are bad tenants. However, the
7 bad in each case is a very, very small percentage.

8 There is a great misunderstanding
9 going on, as I understand it and see it this
10 morning. Lack of knowledge.

11 I would wish that the group this
12 morning, very frankly, was still here. Maybe they
13 would get a better understanding of what this whole
14 program is all about.

15 I heard the Councilman at one point
16 talk about the 20 houses in one block at \$600 a
17 month.

18 The question that went through my
19 mind, not that the owner have 20 houses, but are the
20 20 on Section 8? We are dealing with Section 8.
21 And 600 in some cases, a lot of areas, is not
22 nothing like top money.

23 Now, when we talk about clustering,
24 whosever brain storm that was would say, well, we
25 will put it 40 or 50 poor people together.

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2 I thought you tried to get rid of the
3 projects stacked on top of each other? You blew
4 them up, now you want to build some more
5 mini-projects.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. SEAWARD: They don't take under
8 consideration -- I think the question was asked the
9 price of units.

10 A three-bedroom unit, fair market
11 value, is \$881 per month. Two-bedroom is 704.

12 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Is that depending
13 on the neighborhood?

14 MR. SEAWARD: That is the market
15 value, not depending on the neighborhood.

16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Let me interrupt
17 you, in all fairness.

18 The neighborhood that I live in, that
19 has smaller, three-bedroom homes, on smaller
20 streets, do not get anywhere near \$800 a month.

21 This is in South Philadelphia. This
22 is South Philadelphia, east of Broad Street, South
23 of Washington Avenue. I think you would average
24 probably between 500 and 550 a month.

25 As a matter of fact, I own a

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2 two-bedroom house -- which is the biggest mistake I
3 ever made, but that's besides the point.

4 I own a two-bedroom house which I
5 rent to senior citizens for \$300 a month. And
6 haven't raised the rent in ten years because I
7 didn't want to lose the tenants, and they are nice
8 people, and I pay my mortgage with that. And I pay
9 the mortgage off on the house with the rental.

10 But two-bedroom houses and
11 three-bedrooms houses in that neighborhood are
12 getting 500. They are not getting anywhere near 600
13 a month.

14 MR. SEAWARD: You are right,
15 Councilman.

16 I would like for everybody to
17 understand, if these new projects are built, they
18 would probably be rented on a three-bedroom base,
19 somewhere in the 900 value.

20 Because, number one, I believe they
21 would jump up and ask for 110 percent, which means
22 they would get 881 plus 10 percent because of the
23 cost of the building.

24 I have units, and my number is 184
25 with Section 8. I think now landlords are like

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2 10,000. So that tells you how far I go back. I
3 have units that are less than \$500.

4 Now we can rent three bedrooms, two
5 of them, for the price of one. And somebody said
6 we're getting too much money.

7 My memberships' complaint is they
8 don't want to be in Section 8 now for one reason.
9 And the one reason is the reason you have been
10 kicking Section 8 around this morning, inspections.

11 I disagree with you that they are not
12 inspected. They can write a list of inspections,
13 and put a leaking spigot on there. And if you don't
14 repair the spigot in the time they will be back, you
15 just got abated.

16 They're not blowing money away. That
17 issue never came up this morning. They will take
18 your money away like that. And don't anybody kid
19 yourself.

20 The next thing is, it is very easy to
21 make a man -- I disagree with any landlord, whether
22 he be a member of my organization or not, that
23 doesn't pay his taxes and water.

24 Just as easy as Section 8 asks for a
25 rental license before you get paid, they can just as

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2 easily ask for the tax receipt and the water bill.

3 It doesn't take an order of Congress
4 for that. Just ask for it. That's the fastest way
5 in the world for a man to pay up to that \$5,000 or
6 whatever the issue may be.

7 There are a couple of more.

8 They were saying, I think I heard
9 earlier in the morning, that, you know, you just
10 turn people away. Have any of these people heard of
11 discrimination?

12 I mean, we just can't go turning
13 tenants away that qualify. There's nothing like
14 getting sued for discrimination against tenants.

15 Section 8 also seems, you know -- we
16 are talking Section 8 -- Section 8 is a very small
17 amount or number of units in rental properties in
18 this city.

19 My organization represents, or the
20 members of my organization provide, between 55 and
21 60 percent of the low- and moderate-income housing
22 in the city. But it is not a great percentage of
23 that that's Section 8.

24 So the program is a good program, as
25 far as I am concerned. It is a needed program.

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2 It is one of the first times that my
3 organization have just about agreed with the two
4 previous speakers, that would be Liz and George. We
5 are always on a different side of the fence.

6 But today, when it is needed to be
7 together, we are are together. They quoted possibly
8 the very same things that I would like to say.

9 The inspection, as I said, if you
10 don't get it done, you are cut. So that there is a
11 reason for a high rent in Section 8 in any
12 neighborhood.

13 First of all, it is a better
14 property. Nobody can walk down the street and tell
15 me, oh, that's a Section 8 because the paint is
16 coming off. That's the biggest lie in the book.

17 Section 8 make you scrape paint in
18 the middle of the wintertime. And if you don't, as
19 I said, you are abating, you don't get paid. And
20 you are in the business to get paid. You are in the
21 business to make money.

22 The other reason that the rents
23 should be higher -- not could be, should be
24 higher -- because, for your information, Section 8
25 inspections are worst than L & I's. L & I will let

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2 you get away with some things Section 8 won't let
3 you get away with.

4 So gentlemen, ladies, that's about
5 it. I guess we better keep the program. Need it,
6 need it bad. You can't pay for homeless people.

7 Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Any questions?

10 One question. I think Miss Hersh and
11 Mr. Gould said that if Section 8 was not around,
12 that many of these landlords would just go out of
13 business.

14 MR. SEAWARD: That's a fact.

15 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And is there a
16 market that will take over those houses in order,
17 and come in? Or what will happen to those homes?

18 MR. SEAWARD: Some of the landlords
19 are getting away, as I said, because of the
20 inspection. However, as I said, that's something I
21 never worried about.

22 I kind of look back at a landlord
23 when he said, well, they are too steep, they are too
24 this.

25 I have always told men when they are

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2 working, "Act like I'm going to live here," meaning
3 I want it like I will walk in.

4 I carpet my units. I rent other
5 units for families.

6 So when you upgrade a unit higher
7 than the norm, you expect to get paid higher than
8 the norm.

9 So, but to answer your question, yes,
10 some of them would just be out of business.

11 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Rosemary Farnon,
14 Mary Burrell, Judith Gorski, George Reed.

15 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Good afternoon.
16 Thank you for waiting. Please identify yourself for
17 the record and proceed.

18 MS. ROSEMARY FARNON: Good afternoon,
19 Councilman Kenney. My name is Rosemary Farnon,
20 F-A-R-N-O-N. And I am the President of the Juniata
21 Park Civic Association, and I am a resident of the
22 3900 block of Glendale Street.

23 I come to you this afternoon as both
24 a resident and President of the Juniata Park Civic
25 Association.

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2 I live in zip code 19124, where there
3 are approximately 381 occupied Section 8 houses to
4 date.

5 Total number of homes in my
6 community, Juniata, in a three and a half block
7 radius, are 34 homes and several apartment units,
8 with more to come.

9 We have the Carl Mackley Apartments,
10 which is 140 units, which are now under construction
11 to be 50 percent new certificates of Section 8, plus
12 existing Section 8 tenants will be welcomed to our
13 neighborhood.

14 I come to you not against the Section
15 8 program, but to say that the Section 8 program is
16 much needed in the City of Philadelphia.

17 Everyone deserves a place to live.
18 We cannot always live where we would like, but,
19 unfortunately, we do deserve a place to live.

20 I believe that the problem lies
21 within the concept of the unit, the family unit.

22 One who comes into a property, such
23 as a three-bedroom home, that I have had the
24 experience to live when my neighbors moved into a
25 three-bedroom home with a mother and two children

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2 I am sorry decided to meet other commitments, we
3 have to say that, as going through the records, we
4 have seen numerous properties that are owned by one
5 or two landlords throughout the Juniata Park
6 section.

7 I myself have gone through, I have
8 looked at the properties. They meet the bare-bones
9 guidelines of the federal government -- no lead
10 paint, no broken windows, no exposed wires -- but
11 they do not meet what every neighborhood wants,
12 quality-of-life issues.

13 We are not asking for Anderson
14 windows; we are just asking for nice properties and
15 people who are ready to accept the same
16 responsibility as a homeowner.

17 We welcome anyone into our
18 neighborhood. We believe that clustered housing
19 will not work. The projects didn't work.

20 Scattered housing will work with
21 monitoring. 11 inspectors? That doesn't cut it
22 here.

23 I had the opportunity to stay home
24 while the property next door was inspected by --
25 recently for a new tenant. Inside of three minutes,

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2 from the time the door opened until the time the
3 door closed, he was out the door. And the property
4 was, quote, unquote, inspected.

5 Unbenownst to the inspector, the
6 wires, yes, they were all covered with switch
7 plates, but the electric was being ran by a
8 generator in the garage because the electric had not
9 been turned on yet properly by the Philadelphia
10 Electric Company.

11 I have pictures. But like everyone
12 says, a picture is worth a thousand words.

13 We now in our community meeting have
14 realized that, yes, there are a number of houses in
15 Juniata which are for sale, mainly because our
16 neighborhood was an older community. And if they
17 have died, their houses are left to their children,
18 who choose not to live there as in days gone by.

19 So what we are going to do now, it
20 has been decided, as to come February, we will be
21 distributing a Good Neighbor Handbook. No one will
22 be excluded from the rules and regulations of the
23 Good Neighbor Handbook.

24 In that handbook it will tell you, as
25 a good neighbor, what you should do, when your trash

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2 is, what your cars should have when you bring your
3 car to our neighborhood, whether you are a homeowner
4 or a renter or a Section 8 or just a squatter,
5 maybe. What you should bring with you.

6 Have your car done within the
7 guidelines of a law. If it is inspected and has a
8 legal tag on it, you are welcome to leave it on our
9 streets. If not, don't bring it with you.

10 If you live there and our trash day
11 is Tuesday, please put your trash out after dusk
12 Monday night. Don't put it out all week long,
13 because it is not going to be accepted.

14 You will find in that Good Neighbor
15 package all the people who represent you on the
16 city, state, and federal level.

17 You will find out where you can get
18 help with your energy assistance, where you can get
19 help from the police, sanitation, where you can get
20 help with child care, where you can get just about
21 everything else, from recreations to medical needs,
22 from our community.

23 We will also list our elected
24 officials and what their responsibilities are. Not
25 only our district Councilperson, but those who are

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2 elected to represent us, Council-at-large.

3 By that we feel we will bring better
4 neighbors and better responsibility, and everyone
5 will know the guidelines before they choose to live
6 and raise their children in Juniata.

7 Thank you, Mr. Kenney and your
8 panel.

9 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very much
10 for your testimony.

11 Could you characterize your opinion
12 of the response of the Philadelphia Housing
13 Authority to specific complaints about either
14 housing code violations or social problems that
15 arise as a result of tenant behavior, or the lack of
16 landlord responsibility in mitigating complaints?

17 MS. FARNON: When I contacted -- this
18 is my personal experience. And I can only speak of
19 my personal experience.

20 Out of concern for the safety of the
21 two children who lived next door to me, I found it
22 necessary to find out where the holder of that
23 certificate had gone with her two children. The
24 certificate was issued to a single woman with two
25 children.

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2 They told me politely, after they
3 contacted the landlord, that she had gone to take
4 care of an ailing mother, and left her two children
5 on-site.

6 They would not -- PHA said to me,
7 well, that is not a PHA problem; that is a
8 Department of Health and Human Services problem.

9 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Was that
10 information referred to DHS?

11 MS. FARNON: Well, let me tell you,
12 once the owner of the property was notified and I
13 began to question the owner -- because I or my
14 neighbors cannot understand the concept.

15 If someone is given a certificate to
16 provide a roof over their head and shelter from
17 inclement weather, why, when they leave, that
18 certificate does not go with them.

19 Why someone is allowed to stay in
20 that property, who is an able-bodied person, to take
21 care of that property for six months, with a
22 certificate -- which is very hard to get. We have
23 heard people say that here today -- which that
24 certificate was given to a mother and two small
25 children, should be given to a healthy female to

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2 party all day, all night, not go to work, come in,
3 and come out at the taxpayers' expense.

4 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Are there --

5 MS. FARNON: Fell on deaf ears.

6 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: What is the current
7 condition of the property as we speak?

8 MS. FARNON: As we speak now, the
9 property has just been recently rented to another
10 family, a woman and four small children. That's the
11 house to the right of me. I have four Section 8
12 properties on my street.

13 The house to the rear of me has been
14 rented to a woman, single woman, with three small
15 children.

16 There are other people who stay in
17 the house weeks at a time to the rear of me, and on
18 other sites.

19 But that's permitted under what they
20 call, quote, unquote, the family fiber, which
21 people -- and if you look at the map here, which is
22 blocked now by this screen, which I believe my
23 friends in Mayfair and Lawndale and Northwood and
24 above, have a difficult time understanding the
25 concept because it is new to us.

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2 I read in an article in the paper
3 where Mr. Kromer said that they are willing to come
4 out to speak to people to explain what the Section 8
5 program is all about. But I know not of one time
6 that he has come out to speak to anyone.

7 So maybe we are a little bit
8 ignorant. When you look at the zip codes for the
9 upper part of 19124 and 34 up above, it is because
10 this program is new and people are in fear of what
11 might happen.

12 When you look at real estate -- I
13 would have to say that the real estate next door to
14 me, when this property landlord was first questioned
15 by me, he told me I should be lucky. If I keep it
16 up, he will give me a worse tenant. Unfortunately,
17 maybe I worked myself through the system.

18 If PHA ignored the complaints, then I
19 went to the Department of License & Inspections to
20 make the system work for me. That doesn't mean
21 everyone knows how to do that.

22 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Had there ever been
23 contemplation of reporting or filing a Complaint
24 with the United States Justice Department about the
25 attitude and comments of the landlord?

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2 Because some of those comments, if
3 they are accurate -- and I have no reason to doubt
4 that they are not -- are in fact true, that's the
5 kind of a violation that the federal government
6 would investigate as it relates to potential
7 block-busting and other types of activities to
8 intimidate neighbors into selling their properties,
9 or to intimidate neighbors into not complaining
10 about obvious things that are going on in their
11 street.

12 That is a practice that I have found
13 with a couple landlords in South Philadelphia, who
14 have a similar attitude about this program and about
15 the neighbors and the community.

16 Basically the threat was, if you
17 don't like it, you can sell your house to me and I
18 will convert it to a Section 8 property.

19 Those kinds of comments are
20 violations of federal law under the block-busting
21 issues.

22 And I am wondering whether or not you
23 would look at filing a Complaint or letter to the
24 U.S. Justice Department about that kind of activity,
25 because that is unwarranted.

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2 MS. FARNON: Yes, it is.

3 But outside of causing a ruckus,
4 Councilman Kenney -- I will be very honest with
5 you -- we welcome everyone into our community, as
6 well as I welcome anyone to live to the right of me
7 or to the left of me.

8 Neighbors are neighbors, regardless
9 of their color or their ethnic origin. Neighbors
10 are neighbors. And I would like to live together
11 very happily, happily ever after.

12 Because I have reached the end of my
13 purse strings, so I will be in Juniata until the day
14 the Lord decides to take me home.

15 We realize that Section 8 is up and
16 coming, it has been around for a long time, it is
17 not going anywhere. We realize that. We cannot
18 have people on the street.

19 But not only for ourselves as
20 neighbors, people who have made investments in
21 buying a home. We are asking for those people who
22 are the recipients of Section 8 certificates be
23 given exactly what they deserve, a decent home.
24 Everything that I have in my house, they should be
25 allowed to have.

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2 Because my neighbor could not always
3 meet her commitment of her 30 percent of the rent
4 that she had to pay, she would not call him up and
5 ask him to fix the toilet. She wouldn't call him up
6 and say, "Listen, I know it is not needed that we
7 have screens on the house. But I have two small
8 children; fresh air is important."

9 She would not do that because she
10 knew that he would ask her to leave that property.

11 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very much
12 for your testimony.

13 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: It is more than
14 a question for Mrs. Farnon. It is more of a
15 statement.

16 Mrs. Farnon, you talked about your
17 Good Neighbor Handbook. And Terry Gillen spoke a
18 few speakers ago, and she talked about a sociologist
19 William Julius Wilson, or what he called social
20 organization.

21 By the way, I am the district
22 Councilman that represents her area. I know the
23 good work she does.

24 But you and Terry are saying the same
25 thing. Terry, she quoted this Julius Wilson and

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2 We can pass laws and we can pass regulations and we
3 can make sure they are enforced.

4 But if we do this social organization
5 thing, it is going to be really important to
6 everybody.

7 So thank you for your time.

8 MS. FARNON: You are welcome.

9 And I believe a better education to
10 all people throughout the City of Philadelphia would
11 be an enlightening process to everyone.

12 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you very
13 much.

14 MS. FARNON: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Miss Burrell.
16 Please identify yourself.

17 MS. MARY BURRELL: My name is Mary
18 Burrell. And I am here to represent me. And other
19 neighbors I have, but mainly me.

20 I own my home. And the repairs, most
21 repairs I make myself or I get it repaired.

22 But my income is low, and I am
23 sandwiched between two PHA homes.

24 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Not to interrupt
25 you, but do you know whether the PHA homes are

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2 Section 8 properties or PHA scattered site or HUD
3 properties?

4 MS. BURRELL: I am not too sure.

5 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: You can give the
6 addresses to our staff privately, and we can
7 determine exactly what the property is.

8 MS. BURRELL: But I do know that I
9 have no one to call when I need help, you see.

10 I ask my neighbors not to sit on my
11 steps. And for that, they tore my steps up. I have
12 to repair this. No one is going to repair this for
13 me. Everyone is worrying about them. I didn't
14 bother these people.

15 I also have my bell ring. I mean,
16 this is harassment because I don't want people on my
17 property.

18 When it snows, I shovel theirs. They
19 don't shovel mine. It doesn't matter. But it has
20 to be done, so I shovel theirs.

21 You talk about good neighbor policy.
22 I think they need to learn that.

23 I mean, if your rent is being paid or
24 subsidized for you, that's a privilege. And I can't
25 see where there is a right.

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2 have no one to call. I call, I get the run-around.

3 And I am just here to represent me.

4 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: What I would

5 suggest for you to do is, before you leave,

6 Mr. O'Connor, John --

7 MS. BURRELL: I had to take my

8 neighbor to court. I took my neighbor to court.

9 And she didn't even bother to show up.

10 And then they gave her another date,

11 she still didn't show up. And going to court you

12 think it would stop, but it hasn't.

13 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: What I would

14 suggest doing before you leave today is to make sure

15 you give Mr. O'Connor the addresses of the

16 properties you are concerned about.

17 We will determine what the condition

18 of the property is from its status, whether it is a

19 regular renter, Section 8 tenant, or a HUD property,

20 or a scattered site property.

21 And we will try to address those

22 problems in conjunction with PHA and the police

23 department and License & Inspections.

24 And if you can give him that

25 information before you leave today, we will be happy

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2 to look into that for you.

3 Thank you for coming in and thank you
4 for waiting.

5 Ma'am.

6 MS. VICTORIA WESTIFER: Hi. I am
7 Victoria Westifer. I am the tenant on top of
8 Victoria Chaney.

9 I have been trying to get on Section
10 8 for seven years. I am visually impaired. I have
11 arthritis all through my body.

12 Every time I call, they say it is
13 closed. The last time I called they told me it was
14 all sewed up because in our area we have the
15 Russians, and they are on Section 8 housing.

16 My landlady is already approved to
17 accept Section 8 housing. She has even called on
18 numerous occasions to try and get it through so I
19 would be able to afford my rent.

20 I live on a limited income. I live
21 on SSI. I have been told from agency to agency,
22 "Move if you can't afford it." I can't afford to
23 move. How could I afford to move, to get the money
24 up to move?

25 Where I have been at my place for

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2 is not here today to respond to these specific
3 complaints.

4 I don't have an answer for you today
5 as to accessibility to the program and other help
6 that you may need, or you obviously need, to help
7 you survive.

8 What I would suggest you to do, too,
9 again, is talk to Mr. O'Connor before you leave.
10 And we will try to get an answer from PHA for you.

11 I don't know if it is going to be an
12 adequate answer, but we will certainly try to get
13 one.

14 MS. WESTIFER: Some is better than
15 none.

16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: If they were here
17 today, maybe they could respond. But they are not.

18 So if you could see Mr. O'Connor on
19 the way out, and make sure he gets your name and
20 phone number and address, and we will see what we
21 can do to investigate that situation.

22 MS. WESTIFER: Thank you. I would
23 really appreciate it.

24 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Sir.

25 MR. GEORGE REED: My name is George

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2 Reed. I am from the Juniata section, which you just
3 heard from my Committeewoman.

4 Since the neighborhood has changed, I
5 believe people have the right to live where they
6 live, where they want to live, as long as they want
7 to live decently. This is my problem.

8 Next door to me, I have a Latino
9 living next door to me. They say she qualifies.
10 She qualifies to ruin the quality of my life? Is
11 that what she qualifies for?

12 The property is falling apart. I
13 tried to find out who owns the property. The real
14 estate that did have it says they don't handle it no
15 more. I says, "Well, tell me who handles it." They
16 don't know. This is what I get.

17 This tenant has a loud, foul, filthy
18 mouth. She don't work. The property is falling
19 apart.

20 She throws her garbage on the lawn.
21 I told her not to do this. She says nobody is going
22 to tell her what to do.

23 Men and women, men especially, run in
24 and out of this place day and night. Every day you
25 see a different automobile pulling up, different

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2 license plates. I don't know what the hell is going
3 on with them. But I can't -- I cannot get no
4 satisfaction.

5 But the thing is, the quality of my
6 neighborhood is down. The quality of my life has
7 went down.

8 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Let me ask you a
9 question.

10 Have you been able to determine for
11 sure that this is a Section 8 property?

12 MR. REED: I don't know. I don't
13 know whether it is Section 8 or an unscrupulous real
14 estate moved her in there, or whatever. It is an
15 apartment. I live in a nice house. I keep my house
16 that way.

17 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: How long have you
18 lived in your home?

19 MR. REED: 38 years.

20 And the value of this property is
21 going to go down the sewer because of what is going
22 on in Juniata Park.

23 Now, tell me what's wrong with this
24 story. My youngest daughter is a nurse. She works
25 hard, very hard. She is divorced.

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2 that is currently living in the shelter system have
3 moved on to be eligible for Section 8 certificates.

4 During the time, on the average, we
5 service about 2,000 different individuals for low
6 income -- eligible for low-income housing, which we
7 also do from my office.

8 Many of the complaints, it is based
9 on the realtors not fixing up the properties and
10 demanding rent in the process.

11 Most are afraid that if they do not
12 pay their rent, that they have no rights, and
13 automatically they will be kicked out.

14 We have had some to even go to court
15 who has held up their rent based on the landlord not
16 fixing their properties.

17 And, as a result, the courts ruled
18 against their favor. And, as a result, that they
19 had to return back to homelessness.

20 This is constant. Because when you
21 are a tenant and you go before the courts, very
22 seldom the courts rule in your favor, which is a
23 very, very serious problem.

24 We have been -- I have seen
25 clusterization, is a form of racism,

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2 down -- I am from 4th and Reed, 4th and Washington
3 Avenue. And I heard some of the folks here that
4 came from that community and that neighborhood.

5 And what I am proposing -- there is
6 nothing down there. There is nothing down there to
7 bring that community together whereas culturally
8 that we can understand one another.

9 And it is a cultural process to
10 understand me and for me to understand you outside
11 of our race. And that's what it boils down to to
12 me.

13 And when I look at, even for the
14 children, there is nothing down there to bring the
15 children together, that can then perhaps bring the
16 parents together.

17 Our children have no playgrounds,
18 they have nothing down there in the community. So,
19 as a result of it, what you tend to do is look at
20 faults from each other. So I think more services
21 need to be provided.

22 I have said this to the City of
23 Philadelphia, which we wrote most of the shelter
24 policies for the city. Including the savings
25 policy, where the city -- you know, person could

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2 then be able to save their money in order to move
3 out of the shelter and to be eligible for home
4 ownership, as well as rental. We wrote that for the
5 City of Philadelphia.

6 The problem that we are faced, as I
7 see it today, is, we cannot no longer look at a
8 piece of the pie. But we have to look at the
9 overall of an individual that makes them whole.

10 You cannot wait until a person goes
11 into public housing or Section 8 or scattered sites,
12 and expect them to do a 360-degree turn-around for
13 all the things that the community expects for them
14 to live by.

15 There is a process. And I think it
16 has to come from the front door, rather than the
17 back door.

18 I think the city should be involved
19 in creating a training process. Whereas, when a
20 person is eligible, that they are clear about what
21 they are supposed to do, rather than wait until they
22 get there and then tell them. It has to be done,
23 straight from OSHA's perspective and PHA.

24 I have designed a program from John
25 White, when he first took office, about tenants'

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2 eligibility going into public housing. He took part
3 of it that benefited PHA, but he didn't take all of
4 it. So I think that it needs to be redesigned.

5 And I think clusterization for our
6 people will never, ever be the solution to the
7 problem.

8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Let me ask you a
10 question about the issue of clustering.

11 And I tend to agree that the issue of
12 clustering is antithetical to people integrating
13 into the community and learning to or becoming part
14 of the community, as opposed to isolating people.

15 In some of the areas of formerly
16 homeless individuals who are involved with either --
17 or have been involved in their life with either drug
18 or alcohol addiction or mental illness, which is a
19 large portion of a lot of the people who find
20 themselves homeless, one of the -- again, we have
21 talked about this in the hallway -- successful
22 projects I find is 1515 Fairmount, is Project Home.

23 And the thing that impresses me the
24 most about Project Home is a couple of things.

25 Primarily, it is a permanent solution

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2 to those individuals' housing needs. It is not a
3 transitional shelter approach, but it is a
4 permanent, for the rest of their life.

5 32 people, I believe, are living in
6 decent, clean, safe housing that gives them the
7 support mechanisms that they need to help each other
8 succeed.

9 And the support mechanisms, from my
10 view of being over there, is the ongoing business of
11 the restaurant, the Back Home Cafe, the book store,
12 which also provides people an opportunity to earn a
13 living, and also the clothing operation, that is,
14 takes clothing, repairs or whatever, and then
15 makes -- excuse me. I am going to have to ask the
16 conversation over there to cease. We can't pay
17 attention.

18 And the clothing operation, which
19 provides three ongoing businesses. Plus the ability
20 for people to live together and support each other
21 who have special needs.

22 I am not talking about people overall
23 in the Section 8 program, but special needs,
24 formerly homeless people, who now find an
25 opportunity to lean on each other in a clean, safe,

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2 Fairmount is not only people working together, but
3 also have an input. And I think that is equally as
4 important.

5 1515 is not run by just Sister Mary.
6 It is run by the residents as a partnership. And I
7 am saying that the same exact thing can be
8 developed.

9 Yes, they have a business. And we
10 need to think business, and I agree with that, and
11 not be solely dependent upon a system that's going
12 to deteriorate anyway.

13 But at the same token, I think with
14 all the abandoned buildings that are standing sound
15 structurally, deteriorating on a daily basis, that
16 apprenticeship, such as the same one with Jimmy
17 Carter, who got in touch with our organization when
18 they were first starting the partnership, Sweat
19 Equity Program, why can't the same thing be
20 developed, even in my community, in my
21 neighborhood?

22 I look at -- homeless people rehabbed
23 my house. They did my house. I didn't know what to
24 do with it when I got my house. It was shell. But
25 homeless people went in and rehabbed that property

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2 city and those who are in control of these resources
3 are able to put their act in place, and not blame
4 the victim, then I think that we have a right to
5 live anywhere that we darn near choose to.

6 And I think that, also, that we have
7 a right towards subsidy until we are able to fend
8 for ourselves.

9 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Ma'am, would you please identify
12 yourself.

13 MS. ALICIA CHRISTIAN: My name is
14 Alicia Christian. I am the Executive Director of
15 Dignity Housing, which provides housing for
16 low-income and formerly homeless families and
17 adults.

18 And was, indeed, established through
19 the advocacy of the union of the homeless and allies
20 nearly ten years ago.

21 I appreciate the opportunity to
22 testify.

23 The Dignity experience, I think,
24 flies in the face of those who say scattered site
25 housing doesn't work.

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2 We have 135 scattered site units on
3 line with very-low-income tenants.

4 If you look at the materials I just
5 gave you, I included a list, which doesn't provide
6 exact addresses or names, but lists every block and
7 every zip code in which we have units. And we are
8 virtually in nearly every councilmanic district.

9 I will not say that Dignity Housing
10 works for everyone. I will say that over the past
11 nine years, we have served nearly a thousand
12 families.

13 And our rate of families or
14 individuals who, after support, after counseling,
15 after interventions, cannot adjust to the program
16 requirements or the expectations in the community,
17 the rate of those individuals not working is less
18 than 11 percent, which people tell me is pretty
19 good.

20 Dignity today has more than 400 men,
21 women, and children residing in units in West
22 Philadelphia, South Philadelphia, North
23 Philadelphia, Mount Airy, up by the Boulevard, near
24 the airport, virtually in every section of the
25 city.

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2 More than half of our current
3 tenants, formerly homeless, very low income, have
4 completed goals in a life skills plan. That life
5 skills plan is an addendum to their lease.

6 They pay their rent on time. They
7 can keep their apartment nice. They can, as
8 previous testifiers have stated, set the trash out
9 nice and neatly on trash day.

10 But if they fail to move forward in
11 objectives for education, for pursuing employment
12 readiness, for looking at job options, then they are
13 not in compliance with life skills, and that's an
14 evictable offense.

15 And it is after much counseling, and
16 much intervention, that that decision will be made.

17 I am not suggesting that everyone who
18 needs subsidized housing needs a life skills plan.
19 I am not suggesting that everyone who requires
20 subsidized housing needs intense counseling.

21 There are some people for whom the
22 Section 8 program is needed because of a permanent
23 disability.

24 There are some people for whom the
25 Section 8 program is a passageway to another

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2 option.

3 And there are some, like the Dignity
4 tenants, who for three to six years benefit from the
5 intense supports of our program, which have included
6 scholarships, which have included individual
7 mentoring.

8 We now have tenants who are former
9 tenants of -- we now have a number of former tenants
10 of Dignity Housing who have obtained goals.

11 Two are Philadelphia police officers;
12 five have graduated from four-year colleges,
13 including the University of Pennsylvania; 30 have
14 completed Community College; one is a recent
15 homeowner, though she joins approximately nearly 50
16 homeowners since the program started.

17 But we are particularly proud of one
18 tenant who bought a home that we acquired and
19 rehabbed for sale to a first-time buyer, who
20 happened to be a Dignity tenant.

21 The essence of the Dignity experience
22 is that there are no simplistic solutions. I am not
23 in subsidized housing. I am a homeowner. But I can
24 identify at least three neighbors on my block who I
25 wish I had recourse for.

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2 Not quite bad enough for police
3 intervention, but not quite good enough to be good
4 neighbors. They are homeowners. It comes with the
5 territory.

6 Some of the issues raised by the
7 previous testifier, some of the issues raised by the
8 community person about fostering a good neighbor
9 feeling and a good neighbor environment, I think,
10 are part of the answer.

11 The other, for some people who are
12 tossed into subsidized housing, and really need
13 support services, the issue is the resources for
14 those support services should be forthcoming.

15 And it is more than a call once every
16 six months. It is real, substantive services
17 designed to help you turn your life around.

18 Most people want to do better, and
19 most people want to be better.

20 Dignity Housing works. Take a look
21 at the materials. Take a look at the zip codes. We
22 are everywhere. And we work in every community.

23 And we support the notion that where
24 there is affordable housing as an option, no matter
25 which neighborhood it is in, our people have a right

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2 to access that option.

3 Following me is -- Gloria Blackman is
4 a tenant at Dignity Housing, a recovering substance
5 abuser, and she has her own statement that she would
6 like to make.

7 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Prior to that, I
8 just have a few comments.

9 First of all, would you be interested
10 in a job running the PHA Section 8 program?

11 I don't have the authority to offer
12 you that. But I think that what you have been
13 saying rings very true, regardless of what
14 neighborhood you live in.

15 And that is that people are in
16 circumstances for various reasons, many of those
17 reasons beyond their control.

18 And I don't think anyone, or at least
19 I am speaking for myself, would deny people the
20 opportunity for the help they need to improve their
21 circumstance and to move forward.

22 One of the things that has been the
23 hallmark of your testimony, as I heard it, was that
24 there are also levels of expectation on the part of
25 what we expect from people who are living together

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2 with others as a way of issues of behavior and
3 respect. And respect is, again, a two-way street.

4 One of the saddest parts about this
5 whole hearing and about this whole issue is that a
6 program that serves so many people so well, because
7 of a very small group of landlords and tenants, sad
8 to say, give the entire program a bad name because
9 of lots of other issues.

10 Fear of the unknown, fear of
11 differences, fear of what's happening in your
12 neighborhood, or what you think may happen, or
13 predispositions you may have about people and what
14 they are and what they're about, all those things
15 need to be broken down.

16 But they need to be broken down, I
17 think, on the track that you were talking about, by
18 giving people opportunities, while at the same time
19 having high expectations for those people to
20 succeed.

21 And I do appreciate your testimony
22 and feel that there are lots of common ground
23 amongst people who are on various sides of this
24 issue, if they are open-minded and honest about
25 where they want to go.

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2 So I thank you for your testimony.

3 And please identify yourself for the
4 record and proceed.

5 MS. GLORIA BLACKMAN: My name is
6 Gloria Blackman. I am also a tenant at Dignity
7 House. I moved in Dignity March of this year.

8 Dignity helps me a whole lot. It
9 provides a program for hundreds of people such as
10 myself.

11 I also was on drugs at one time. I
12 also had three years clean off of drugs.

13 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Congratulations.

14 MS. BLACKMAN: Thank you.

15 Dignity has provided for me to better
16 my skills as far as coming up there, working for
17 them.

18 I go to school at night, I get my
19 GED. So I will be out from like 8:00 in the morning
20 until like 10:00 at night. When I come home, I be
21 tired, but I have a challenge, myself, to like do
22 some things for myself today.

23 I thank this program for allowing me
24 to -- for a better stepping stone in my life. It
25 gives me opportunity and challenge to challenge the

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2 world and what the society has to offer. I have no
3 limitations for myself anymore.

4 I didn't want for nothing, but
5 Dignity let me know that there is a lot out there
6 for me to get, and it is a seed.

7 I have dreams and goals to fulfill.
8 I am going after my dreams and my goals. Within two
9 years I expect to be a homeowner.

10 I am an only child. My parents died
11 at the age of 14, five months apart from each
12 other. I have no kids, so I am a single, black
13 woman that is struggling, but succeeding.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Congratulations,
16 and best of luck to you.

17 Sir.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. ARTHUR GREEN: Good afternoon.
20 My name is Arthur Green, and I am an advocate for
21 the Pennsylvania Coalition to Save Subsidized
22 Housing.

23 I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas,
24 United States citizen, and a 20-year-plus resident
25 of Philadelphia.

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2 I have lived a life of the well-to-do
3 and also the life of the homeless and depressed,
4 existing from cardboard pouch to garbage bag
5 dinner.

6 By the way, my discussion is about
7 the clusterization. And my coalition is against
8 it.

9 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Yes, sir.

10 MR. GREEN: I ask you to hear these
11 words with your heart and not your mind.

12 Again we find ourselves face to face
13 with the discussion of what is right or wrong, evil
14 versus good, hate versus love, freedom to be or not
15 to be.

16 Freedom, the truth. Freedom is free
17 for few, but comes at a costly price of time and
18 loss of lives for others. Surely those of us that
19 know the cause should not forget the price.

20 Hate. Freedom allows hate to
21 demonstrate or voice its opinion. Surely you have
22 seen it.

23 Remember the man with the funny
24 mustache? Have you seen the hate that hides its
25 face behind hoods?

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2 If hate would have its way, we would
3 be marching, and the South would most definitely
4 rise again.

5 However, freedom can't and will never
6 allow hate to rule the world. Love must and shall
7 rule the world.

8 The American dream, a promise of
9 freedom and equality. The Fair Housing Act, a
10 landmark, can stand America's promise of the
11 Constitution to all citizens.

12 To deny freedom fought and won is
13 denial. To take it away is murderous.

14 You are Philadelphia. You know about
15 freedom and equality. You have a reputation. The
16 mission of your name implies freedom.

17 You began the cry for independence.
18 The Constitution was written here. Aren't you the
19 keeper of the Liberty Bell? The Bill of Rights was
20 signed here.

21 Philadelphia says welcome America.
22 Every summer, Unity Day. Philadelphia is the model
23 city of the next century.

24 What is your message to the rest of
25 the country? Philadelphia can find ways to play

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2 together, but we can't plan ways to live together?

3 Freedom is a process that love
4 motivates and God sanctions. Freedom is a process
5 we may give out, but we can never give up.

6 Section 8, a process of freedom
7 living of choice, not a process for plantations or
8 concentration camps.

9 And I want to say something about
10 what you said about --

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. GREEN: -- you know, I understand
13 and I am pleased to hear that Council is against
14 this clusterization.

15 But you made a comment about the
16 homes on 15th Street and the people that live -- the
17 comment you just made to Leona.

18 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: There is a 32-unit
19 facility at 1515 Fairmount that includes both a
20 restaurant, a book store, and a clothing store
21 inside the actual facility, where 32 former homeless
22 people, some substance-abuse-recovering people, and
23 some mentally ill people, and other people who don't
24 have mental illness or substance abuse problems,
25 live together in one structure.

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2 For people that want to live in
3 communities like that, that's good. But I would
4 like to have, and I did get, life skills coming
5 through the recovery program that I went through.

6 And eventually I will be getting my
7 own and living with my woman in my own home.

8 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Yes, sir.

9 MR. GREEN: For people that want to
10 stay with somebody, that's good.

11 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: For me, the
12 permanency is an issue of choice. It would be the
13 choice for those individuals to stay there or not.

14 But my point is, making the choice to
15 stay there gives people a support mechanism that
16 they need at that time in their life to improve
17 their situation.

18 MR. GREEN: What I think needs to be
19 done -- and like I said, I went through the shelter
20 system -- is, I think you should start looking at
21 the shelter system.

22 You did say something about the
23 warehousing. They need to cut the warehousing out.

24 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Yes, sir.

25 MR. GREEN: All right. It is more

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2 funds going in to putting in people to give life
3 skills to prevent people that's going into
4 shelters.

5 There should be people looking at
6 them, looking at their medical and mental
7 conditions. All right?

8 Because I can tell you for a fact,
9 and I know, three years living on the streets of
10 Philadelphia, it can make you crazy.

11 MS. CHRISTIAN: As I heard you
12 mention about the 1515 Fairmount, I can recall,
13 because many of us was there, we had to fight the
14 City of Philadelphia through tooth and nails to get.

15 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: For three years;
16 right?

17 MS. CHRISTIAN: For three years.

18 And the bulk of the residents that's
19 at 1515 Fairmount are mental health consumers, the
20 bulk of them are.

21 So we had to fight this city,
22 including the Mayor, to go to court in order to get
23 1515 in place.

24 And I had to bring that --

25 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: The federal

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2 court --

3 MS. SMITH: The federal court.

4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: -- ordered the
5 city to obey the city laws and so on. Because we
6 were not obeying city ordinances.

7 MS. SMITH: That's right. That's
8 right.

9 But my point is --

10 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: By the way, we
11 were listening to some neighborhood individuals that
12 did not want -- because I live in that
13 neighborhood.

14 MS. SMITH: Right. Right.

15 And we had to -- and I am bringing
16 that out. It is at the same level of racism against
17 homeless people and people who don't have a place to
18 stay, is the same thing that I heard here today. Is
19 the same exact thing.

20 And here we are many, many years
21 later fighting the same thing.

22 We have a right to choose any place
23 we want to live. We have that right. Whether it is
24 subsidized housing, or not. And that has been part
25 of the problem. Because we have been so divided,

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2 until we don't understand.

3 I would like to see us, if the city
4 don't want houses, I would like to see the city give
5 them to us. Give them to us.

6 Because there is no reason why over
7 20,000 homeless people are sleeping on the streets
8 of the City of Philadelphia. There is no reason
9 why -- and that is true. That is true.

10 There is no reason why all of these
11 properties are standing there vacant and
12 deteriorating.

13 And slum landlords -- and I will be
14 done -- the slum landlords have all of the rights.
15 We have none. And we are saying, let us run.

16 (Applause.)

17 MS. CHRISTIAN: This is what we have
18 been meeting about.

19 How do we run the slum landlords? If
20 the city and the state and the feds are not going to
21 fund these slumlords, we will be the CDCs. We know
22 how to run programs.

23 We are not given the resources and
24 the opportunity, but we know how to run programs.

25 So we want to put together -- we

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2 already have a coalition together. It is called
3 Save Our Homes, that our brother and a lot of
4 members that are here are part of it. It is
5 fighting to save our homes and Section 8, and et
6 cetera.

7 But if the slum landlords are not
8 doing the job, give us that money, give us that
9 opportunity, and we will show you and tell you how
10 it is supposed to work and how we can succeed.

11 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

12 Whittier Dow, and Cheri Honkala after
13 Mr. Dow.

14 Good afternoon, Mr. Dow.

15 MR. DOW: Good afternoon. If you
16 don't mind, I would like to stand.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: No problem. You
18 give your testimony however you please, and identify
19 yourself for the record.

20 MR. WHITTIER DOW: Thank you. My
21 name is Whittier Dow. I am from the Housing
22 Consortium for Disabled Individuals. I am a Fair
23 Housing Specialist.

24 We are a private nonprofit who deals
25 specifically with the housing problems of the

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2 disabled. And we are here to testify our continued
3 support for the Section 8 program.

4 And one reason our organization has a
5 concern is, I have not heard too much talk about the
6 needs of the disabled housing community as it
7 relates to Section 8 and what goes on in the city.

8 First of all, the disabled community,
9 there is over a half a million people with some type
10 of disabling condition in Philadelphia.

11 And those people that have
12 disabilities, the average income of a person with a
13 disability is \$520 a month. And most of this income
14 comes from SSI, SSD, some type of federal income.

15 As I heard the young lady testify
16 earlier about her frustration of being on the
17 Section 8 waiting list, I have been working for the
18 housing consortium for the last seven years now, and
19 that's a thing that I have heard quite readily,
20 about people who have been on the PHA waiting list
21 for years and years and years.

22 And it always seems like,
23 particularly in this city, that the disabled
24 community, when it comes to being on the waiting
25 list for PHA, is always the last one to get -- to

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2 have their issues addressed.

3 We're saying that the city should
4 reevaluate how they review a waiting list, if there
5 is such a waiting list that still exists.

6 We in the housing community have
7 problems sometimes with trying to find out whether
8 there really is a PHA housing list that exists,
9 whether it gets purged, how it gets purged, who gets
10 on it, who doesn't get on it. We're saying that
11 this should be one consideration in examining
12 Section 8.

13 Also, we are in strong disagreement
14 with clustering of people. Because, first of all,
15 it leads to discrimination, ghettoization, and it
16 also has a disparaging impact on the disabled
17 community. Because the disabled community is always
18 the last one to get serviced when it comes to any
19 type of service.

20 Furthermore, Section 8, if you start
21 to cluster people, it will lead to violations of
22 fair housing.

23 And fair housing is an issue that I
24 always talk to with the city officials, none of
25 which came out today, unfortunately. I wish they

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2 had. Because the city has not taken an aggressive
3 stand toward enforcing fair housing.

4 And when I talk about fair housing, I
5 talk about not only people having the ability like
6 yourself, Councilman, to move into a neighborhood,
7 or like myself. But I also talk about hate crimes.

8 And when the city aggressively takes
9 a stand and takes fair housing as being a part of
10 the housing policy, and implements training to
11 neighborhoods and residents, some of these issues
12 that we are addressing today may be eliminated
13 toward retraining and education.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You know that
15 clustering violates the Fair Housing Act of the City
16 of Philadelphia.

17 MR. DOW: Yes, sir. But no one in
18 the city Administration seems to take fair housing
19 as being a fair -- as being an honest thing to go
20 after.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: The people in this
22 Council do that.

23 MR. DOW: I am not talking about the
24 Councilman.

25 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I know. I am just

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2 consider your examination of the Section 8 program,
3 you have to look at the policies that are coming
4 down from HUD itself.

5 There is a de-emphasis now, away from
6 rental housing, towards home ownership. And if
7 vouchers and certificates are to be used, there
8 should be some kind of way where people can
9 integrate a certificate and a voucher, along with
10 their income and along with what the landlord or the
11 bank would receive to make it possible to put that
12 person in a home-ownership program.

13 Because that's the aspect that I have
14 not heard addressed too much, the emphasis toward
15 more home ownership.

16 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We have been
17 discussing that. And we discussed that when
18 Congressman Fattah was here.

19 MR. DOW: Yes.

20 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And so on,
21 Mr. Dow.

22 I will make your whole statement part
23 of the record.

24 Would you like to see the Section 8
25 expanded? Because right now it is very limited.

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2 And I should say, people on disability are not being
3 able to break into the waiting list.

4 And what I get from you is that you
5 would like to see the program expanded in order to
6 be able to accommodate folks that are there and in
7 need of Section 8.

8 MR. DOW: Yes, Councilman.

9 Particularly for the people that I
10 see every day. There definitely needs to be an
11 expansion of the program. There needs to be more
12 intense support programs when they go into a unit or
13 when they go into home ownership.

14 Home ownership counseling programs
15 should be designed specifically to suit the needs of
16 the disabled community, you know.

17 Because there are issues that are
18 very unique to the disabled community. You have a
19 lot of people who have not had an opportunity to
20 live either on their own, and even in home
21 ownership.

22 We also suggest, Councilman -- and
23 this is in my statement, but I would like to state
24 this so you can hear it -- that one way to enhance
25 the usability of Section 8 is to form partnerships.

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2 And these partnerships should come
3 from other nonprofits, Fannie May, the banking
4 industry, the universities, the hospitals in the
5 area, to make a home ownership and then, like, make
6 that a viable possibility.

7 And I urge, before the Council, that
8 the Council looks at the way that the city goes
9 about dealing with fair housing issues, and that
10 they no longer just take fair housing as being
11 something when a neighbor gets harassed, where the
12 best way to solve the problem is by relocation.

13 The best way of solving the problem
14 of discrimination and patterns like that is
15 reeducation and making sure that people are trained
16 and they know what fair housing is. And it is
17 education. And the city should take a proactive
18 stand on fair housing.

19 I thank the Council for their guts
20 for having this hearing. I am sorry that more of
21 the city officials weren't here.

22 But I commend the Council for
23 allowing myself and other people like myself from
24 organizations, and private citizens, the opportunity
25 to speak.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Miss Cheri

5 Honkala.

6 MS. CHERI HONKALA: Good afternoon.

7 My name is Cheri Honkala, and I am from an

8 organization in Philadelphia called the Kensington

9 Welfare Rights Union.

10 I am happy that Council is holding

11 these hearings this afternoon. However, I am not

12 happy that none of the Johns are here, John White,

13 John Street, John Kromer.

14 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: John Rendell.

15 MS. HONKALA: John Rendell. What

16 happened to Kenney?

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: He had to do some

18 stuff.

19 MS. HONKALA: Oh, he was busy?

20 Okay. Because I was going to suggest a cluster John

21 program.

22 I am here today to speak in support

23 of Section 8 and, I daresay, the expansion of the

24 Section 8 program in Philadelphia.

25 We have a serious problem with

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2 increase in homelessness in our area. And I am also
3 here to speak against cluster housing.

4 First of all, in our organization, we
5 start with a different kind of ideology, which is
6 that poor folks are capable of analysis,
7 understanding what's happening in the City of
8 Philadelphia, and trying to read between the lines
9 when it comes to politics.

10 And, so, therefore, even though
11 sometimes my slated role as a poor person in
12 Philadelphia is to give one of testimony, I would
13 also like to attempt to put forward an analysis of
14 what I see happening in regards to the whole
15 discussion around Section 8 in the City of
16 Philadelphia.

17 I am saddened to see that it is being
18 put forward that poor folks somehow are innately
19 incapable of cleaning their houses, attract roaches,
20 and somehow don't know how to take out the garbage.

21 And I say this as a formerly homeless
22 woman who resided in the City of Philadelphia. And
23 me becoming homeless wasn't a result of not having
24 work ethics, wasn't a result of not knowing how to
25 care for my child or how to clean my house; it was a

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2 interest, since almost all of the Community
3 Development Corporations, probably most all of them,
4 receive funding from the actual guy, John Kromer,
5 from the Office of Housing and Community
6 Development, who has proposed the cluster
7 programming in the City of Philadelphia.

8 So if you get funded from the
9 gentleman, it probably is difficult to come forward
10 and talk against such a discriminatory measure.

11 However, we think that since Council
12 is very interested in looking at absentee landlords,
13 that a recommendation would be to begin to check
14 into the absentee landlords in Center City.

15 There are a great deal of them in the
16 Center City area. And perhaps that would be a good
17 place to start.

18 Not to mention the concentration on
19 the amount of abandoned houses in the City of
20 Philadelphia that continue to fall down around us.

21 And we need to begin to concentrate
22 on developing a plan on what we're going to do with
23 the enormous numbers of homeless families who are
24 going to have nowhere to sleep in the City of
25 Philadelphia because our city too participated in --

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2 there was some good leadership, but various
3 different folks participated much in the same way
4 that different folks are participating in the
5 dismantling of public housing here in our area.
6 Which brings me to the question of race.

7 Like the whole issue of welfare
8 reform, race was used throughout the entire country
9 to go forward with dismantling of the safety net
10 program that all of us had the luxury of living
11 under for 60 years of our lifetime.

12 And now we get to see race used, once
13 again, towards the dismantling of a program that has
14 kept many families, particularly children, off the
15 streets of Philadelphia.

16 I mean, when we get into questions of
17 management, we know that there is plenty of blame to
18 go around in this process. And that involves all of
19 the Johns and, like my Councilman said, Rendell in
20 this process, as well.

21 We need to be aware of the fact that
22 this stuff is incredibly dangerous. We know that
23 people don't just wake up in the middle of the night
24 and say, "I'm going to take it on my task to find
25 out who are Section 8 tenants."

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2 We know the real deal here. Because
3 we have had the misfortune to actually know several
4 of the residents in the Philadelphia area that a
5 great deal of politicians have done some wonderful
6 lightings of fires under various different folks,
7 ward leaders, you know, the folks that control the
8 neighborhoods, to begin to start some problems in
9 the neighborhood, as if there is a big problem with
10 any given house on a block.

11 And, so, we have seen this process in
12 some very sad situations that have resulted in
13 families becoming homeless again. Not because they
14 were bad tenants, but because some politicians had
15 other agendas and wanted to run low-income families
16 out of different sections of the city.

17 And the sad thing is that this whole
18 debate is beginning to pit neighbor against
19 neighbor. And for low-income families that are on
20 Section 8, that are doing fine, clean their house,
21 are looking for employment, you name it, become
22 victims in this process, as well.

23 Because if they speak out, they are
24 afraid that people are going to come forward, find
25 out their address, write down their license plate,

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2 and begin to have them live in a fish bowl.

3 And I think that that's really sad,
4 particularly during this upcoming holiday season.

5 And I am sorry that the Councilman
6 isn't here. He referred to 1515 on several
7 occasions. And we have several petitions that we
8 have brought from all the members of 1515 Fairmount,
9 as well as the various different programs in the
10 City of Philadelphia, and residents of Section 8,
11 and non-residents that don't get Section 8 but that
12 are just residents, that are homeowners in the City
13 of Philadelphia, in support of the Section 8
14 program.

15 And we can provide those for
16 Council.

17 Lastly, we just think that, again,
18 that we have got to do something about feeding the
19 fire, dismantling a program, and creating a larger
20 crisis for all of us here in Philadelphia.

21 As we go into the holiday season,
22 with growing numbers of homeless families, we don't
23 want to participate in having dismantling of a
24 program and the scaring away of landlords, some of
25 the good ones, from providing decent and affordable

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2 housing in the City of Philadelphia.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Cheri, I don't
5 think from this, at least today, that we made very
6 clear that the majority of this Council feels very
7 strongly that this program has to stay and has to be
8 fixed in terms of whatever problems there are.

9 But that the program itself is not
10 the problem, and neither are the tenants.

11 MS. HONKALA: We know that.

12 We think that this is really about
13 like who is going to be running for Mayor this next
14 election. And there needed to be a juicy issue, and
15 that's what we think.

16 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I think today has
17 gone a long way.

18 And I think the reason for this
19 hearing, in essence, was because of the festering
20 that was going on throughout some neighborhoods in
21 this city.

22 And that a few of us decided that we
23 needed to have an open dialogue where everybody was
24 invited. And that we needed to begin opening up the
25 windows and bringing in some fresh air, and really

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2 looking at where it is that we need to go.

3 I think that that has happened today,
4 you know. In many ways that has happened today,
5 without all of the Johns that you say and so on.
6 That has happened today.

7 They will have to come before
8 Council, Rendell and Kromer and PHA, and all of
9 these individuals will --

10 MS. HONKALA: John White, John
11 Kromer.

12 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: -- will be coming
13 to Council in order to begin.

14 Because we have a record now of a lot
15 of witnesses that have come, and landlords that have
16 come, before us today. And they will have to begin
17 putting answers to all the questions that have
18 arisen.

19 One of the questions, or one of the
20 issues that is not going to be, and at least from my
21 part and I think from what I hear from Jim Kenney
22 and David Cohen, who are the three major sponsors of
23 this resolution, is that we don't want to see the
24 dismantling of Section 8 in any way, shape, or form;
25 that we do want to see the program run efficiently

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2 and much better than it is.

3 And so that the key situation, I
4 think that what today has done, is that we have put
5 the debate at another level. We have taken it away
6 from the hidden rooms and the festering.

7 And any politicians that wanted to
8 come to Council today, they were invited. Everybody
9 in the city knew these hearings were going to take
10 place.

11 The Congressman came, and he spoke.
12 Other individuals who may have had an opinion, and
13 if they had wanted to come in, this was their
14 opportunity.

15 This Committee will not go out of
16 session today. We will recess, but we will recess
17 to a date certain in order to have all of the Johns
18 and the Eds come before Council and share
19 information and hear our opinion.

20 And before anything is done about
21 clustering and whatever it is, this Council will be
22 heard from. And I believe that we will represent
23 the voice of the people.

24 MS. HONKALA: Okay.

25 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Mr. Chairman.

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
3 much.

4 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: I just want to make
5 one comment.

6 First of all, I apologize for having
7 to use the men's room. I know I had to leave the
8 room. But certain human functions --

9 MS. HONKALA: I would like to thank
10 you for using it.

11 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: -- do take
12 precedent. And I do apologize for not being here
13 when you started your testimony.

14 But I had stopped in my office on the
15 way from the men's room and heard some of the
16 comments you were making relative to, perhaps,
17 people's motives or underlying messages or
18 conspiracies or politics.

19 I don't think I have said anything in
20 this debate from the onset of this debate in this
21 room today or in any other forum, in the Northeast
22 or in any other neighborhood, that has not been
23 consistent in my position that this program needs to
24 be saved, it needs to be improved in many areas when
25 it comes to relationships with landlords, and some

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2 of the issues relative to the behavior of tenants.

3 I think they are fair issues for discussion.

4 I have never in any circumstance said
5 that it should be dismantled or eliminated. I think
6 it is a very important program.

7 And the one thing I would caution
8 you, with all due respect, is to not do the same
9 thing you accuse us of doing, and that's
10 pre-supposing what's in my mind or in my heart or in
11 my motivations.

12 And I won't pre-suppose what your
13 motivations are, and I don't think you should
14 pre-suppose what mine may be.

15 Because my motivations, so you know
16 for the record, are to make sure that people have
17 access to clean, safe, affordable housing, despite
18 their economic condition, in any neighborhood they
19 would like to live in, while at the same time
20 allowing those properties to be integrated into an
21 existing stable community that is accepting of those
22 individuals.

23 Not repressive, not avoidance, none
24 of those things. But making sure that everyone
25 understands that the program is run in a consistent

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2 The issue that comes from my own particular
3 neighborhood, where there are Section 8 tenants who
4 are not behaving appropriately, the predominant
5 amount of them are white.

6 So from an issue of race, it is not
7 there for me. It is there for other people in the
8 community at large. And I think that is sad. And
9 those people need to be educated and changed, their
10 mindset needs to be changed. But that's a long-term
11 process.

12 If this program is going to work and
13 serve people the way it should be served, people
14 need to accept the program and embrace the program,
15 and not have Section 8 be the buzzword it has
16 become.

17 And I think by all of our efforts we
18 can change that stigma and change that attitude, and
19 make this thing go forward in a positive way.

20 MS. HONKALA: Thank you. And I agree
21 with you. Certainly a man should be judged by his
22 deeds and not his words.

23 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

24 MS. HONKALA: As well as who he keeps
25 company with and his relationships, as well.

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2 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: I don't know about
3 who he keeps company with. That's up for debate.

4 I wouldn't predispose to judge you
5 for who you keep company with, and you shouldn't
6 predispose to judge who I keep company with.

7 MS. HONKALA: Why not?

8 That's fine with me.

9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilman Mariano.

10 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Cheri, two
11 questions. I keep company with Jim, though, just so
12 you know.

13 MS. HONKALA: This is my Councilman.
14 God bless you.

15 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: My one question
16 is, we have heard a lot about PHA today. And I am
17 one of the people that are mad because John, John,
18 and Ed aren't here. I am mad, I don't like it,
19 because they didn't let us know. But I will deal
20 with that like I deal with everything else here, as
21 it comes.

22 But you see it at a different level
23 because you are involved with the Kensington Welfare
24 Rights. And I know what you do, and I think it is a
25 good thing. Because somebody has to be here.

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2 But do they make the homeless beg for
3 these secret certificates? I mean, it can't be
4 pleasant at that level. Because I know I
5 represent --

6 MS. HONKALA: Councilman, I know that
7 you know this. Most things --

8 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: But I need them
9 to know that. I am not trying to trick you.

10 MS. HONKALA: It is all politics.

11 I mean, you get things in the City of
12 Philadelphia based on who it is that you know. All
13 right? The squeaky wheel gets the grease. That's
14 how things --

15 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: See, I must not
16 know the right people. I can get Sixers and
17 Phillies tickets, but I can't get the homeless
18 certificates for the people that need it. I am
19 serious.

20 There are a lot of us here that you
21 might think we know, and we are that politically
22 connected. We are not.

23 MS. HONKALA: But do you know what?
24 I am not going to attack the Section 8 program
25 because similar to --

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2 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I don't want to
3 do that. But there must be something at that level
4 where it can't be great.

5 I mean, if you are on a list for four
6 or five years and it is a legitimate need for a
7 certificate, I mean, something is not right.

8 MS. HONKALA: Well, the thing is --

9 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: You don't see a
10 list; right?

11 MS. HONKALA: Correct.

12 I am not going to get into talking
13 about -- sitting here and talking about the various
14 different -- fall into the trap of talking about the
15 various different things that need to be --

16 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: It is not a
17 trap. I need to know what goes on at that level.

18 MS. HONKALA: You have to be careful
19 with these politicians, you know.

20 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I consider us
21 statesmen more than politicians.

22 MS. HONKALA: Okay, statesmen.

23 But the thing is that, in all various
24 different programs and in political offices, you
25 name it, there is always room for improvement.

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2 But the thing is that I get afraid of
3 a bandwagon approach. Right? Where we are going to
4 throw out a bunch of misinformation to the general
5 public, and -- you know, like if you listen to the
6 Rush Limbaugh station, like this is the number one
7 issue right now.

8 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: I don't listen to
9 him.

10 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I don't listen
11 to him, either.

12 MS. HONKALA: Well, that's good. I
13 will let you know what's on it.

14 Like, dismantling Section 8 in this
15 country is the number one thing on Rush Limbaugh
16 right now. It is the next thing.

17 So I just want to make sure that we
18 are careful that we are not participating in that
19 process.

20 And maybe we are not conscious of
21 playing that particular role, but that we make sure
22 that we try and -- unless we got a better plan,
23 unless we got a better program, let's not throw more
24 and more children out onto the streets. That's all
25 I'm saying.

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2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: One last
4 question, sort of tongue in cheek.

5 If you know who is going to be Mayor,
6 let me know. I can make some money on it. Talk to
7 me later. Let me know.

8 MS. HONKALA: There is a whole list.
9 You would not believe who is running.

10 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Will his name be
11 John?

12 MS. HONKALA: I pray not. Who
13 knows? Who knows who it is going to be?

14 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I could use that
15 information.

16 CHAIRMAN COHEN: You have not yet
17 been excused by the Chair.

18 MS. HONKALA: I am sorry.

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: In I think it is
20 this morning's Inquirer, there is a story about two
21 or three Kensington homes that have been built that
22 are available at, I think, a \$29,000 market price.
23 And that they have been available for the last eight
24 months. Could you explain that?

25 Because what we hear is the terrible

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2 need for homes that exist. And I cannot understand
3 why these homes have not been occupied.

4 MS. HONKALA: On what block are
5 they?

6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: I don't know the
7 block.

8 MS. HONKALA: Sometimes that has to
9 do with why.

10 CHAIRMAN COHEN: They are homes that
11 have been rehabilitated.

12 MS. HONKALA: I mean it is a whole
13 host of things. I mean, one, depending on the
14 block, the question of race --

15 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Are you familiar
16 with the particular homes referred to in the
17 article?

18 MS. HONKALA: No, I am not.

19 But I just want to reiterate a very
20 sad reality about the State of Pennsylvania right
21 now.

22 I just checked with some friends in
23 the South that have been long-term working on, like,
24 hate groups and that kind of stuff.

25 This last year we just hit the rate

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2 in which we have the largest number of hate groups
3 in the entire country now. And that's a real sad
4 statement about the state it is that we're living
5 in.

6 And you know that the history of
7 Kensington has some of that bad history that we have
8 been all working to try and change.

9 But I would hope that that's -- I
10 need to familiarize myself with that particular
11 story before I can speak to it.

12 But home ownership sounds like a
13 wonderful idea, but home ownership is great only if
14 you can afford it.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. HONKALA: Councilman Cohen, can I
17 go?

18 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Yes.

19 But when you find out about those
20 homes that are reported -- because I think a
21 Kensington CDC was involved.

22 And it is a story, I think, also
23 about another Kensington. People speaking, feeling
24 that Kensington as a neighborhood has been
25 derogated.

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2 And they talk about the finer parts
3 of the neighborhood which no one refers to. This
4 was part of the complaint in the article.

5 And then they talked about either two
6 or three homes that they have had trouble selling
7 because people, apparently, were concerned about the
8 reputation of Kensington as a neighborhood, as a
9 result of all of the talk recently about problems
10 that exist in that area.

11 I would like, after you read the
12 article, I would like to get an explanation as to
13 why that is happening.

14 Is it because banks are unwilling to
15 give a mortgage? Because the houses are very
16 moderately priced.

17 MS. HONKALA: Yes. Absolutely.

18 And, again, I will look at the
19 article. But I think that we all need to make sure
20 that we follow the money in this process, you know,
21 in terms of political alignments, who is in charge
22 of what programs, what programs are getting money
23 from who.

24 I think that in all of this stuff,
25 you know, sometimes various different community

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2 development corporations have been used for
3 different folks as political agendas. And I just
4 think that it is important that we follow the
5 money.

6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Cheri, coming from
7 83 years of experience, a large portion of which has
8 been devoted to the political apparatus, there is
9 such a thing as being too cynical, to the point
10 where you don't participate and help formulate
11 programs.

12 Anybody who thought that the turnout
13 of the number of Council members here today was an
14 indication of people running for Mayor, rather than
15 of people looking for some kind of answers to a
16 problem which threatens to divide this city, put
17 more homeless on the street, I think is missing the
18 point.

19 You can be cynical and decide that
20 all politicians are no good --

21 MS. HONKALA: I don't think that.

22 CHAIRMAN COHEN: -- and decide where
23 that leaves you, or you can become a player.

24 We are looking -- and I thought the
25 number of people who were present here attested to

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2 the fact that they think this City Council is a body
3 interested in a problem, wanting to solve.

4 And I am just suggesting that it
5 might be helpful if you and the organizations you
6 represent decide to become players in an attempted
7 solution.

8 There may be among us all kinds of
9 people with differing political ambitions.

10 But also there is among us a very
11 strong feeling of, we want to do something positive
12 that will help the situation in Philadelphia. And
13 we invite your participation.

14 MS. HONKALA: We have a plan for a
15 new Pennsylvania. And we have some very different
16 proposal on what we would like to see and how we
17 would like to see money invested in bringing back
18 Philadelphia to the standard that it should be
19 brought to.

20 CHAIRMAN COHEN: We may not be able
21 to do much about all of Pennsylvania because our
22 authority is limited to the city.

23 MS. HONKALA: But there are specifics
24 in there to Philadelphia.

25 So I would be more than happy to send

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2 some of that stuff to your office.

3 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Well, we would
4 suggest that.

5 Because we all represent different
6 points of view. We are trying to find a common
7 basis that permits Section 8 to be strengthened, to
8 carry out the mission that it originally had, that
9 we think is a very substantial part still being
10 carried out.

11 But because it is the next step on
12 the extreme right-wing addenda for destruction, it
13 is facing very severe attack.

14 Those of us who believed that the
15 program has merit can spend our time just chopping
16 everybody up and saying, nobody is sincere and it is
17 all political, or we can work together and try to
18 develop, save, and expand this program.

19 We think you are a person and your
20 organization as a group is very capable of making a
21 very important contribution. And we just urge that
22 you take, for the moment, our good faith.

23 Later on, if we fail, then you can
24 say you knew it all along, that we were only cynical
25 politicians.

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2 MS. HONKALA: I know you have one of
3 the best histories.

4 CHAIRMAN COHEN: We want to try to
5 get to an answer. All right?

6 MS. HONKALA: Yes. Thank you very
7 much.

8 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
9 much.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Ed Schwartz. And Ed
12 is a Councilman who is sitting on the other side.
13 Once you hold an office, you are entitled to use
14 that title.

15 And Ed was a very productive member
16 of this body for a good number of years, until the
17 city stole him from us and put him in charge of
18 housing.

19 Ed, we are delighted to have you here
20 with us on this problem.

21 MR. EDWARD SCHWARTZ: Thank you,
22 Councilman.

23 My name is Ed Schwartz, and I am here
24 representing the Institute for the Study of Civic
25 Values, and whatever I know about this after about

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2 rye bread company that said they had to answer to a
3 higher authority. I felt like that.

4 So that anybody who came to our
5 office with a complaint about a property that we had
6 something to do with, drugs, noise, all the things
7 you heard about this morning, my reaction was, get
8 those people out of there as quickly as possible.

9 I also felt very strongly, and have
10 continued to work since leaving government, that
11 rental properties and PHA properties and all
12 properties had to be connected in some way to the
13 neighborhood, and that we do have a difficulty in
14 frequent situations of being able to involve renters
15 in activities in the community.

16 Now, I haven't just talked about
17 that. The first social contracts I negotiated in
18 the city were deliberately done in Queen Village,
19 between Southwark and that neighborhood,
20 specifically to make the point that we needed to
21 build a community between residents of public
22 housing and residents of -- homeowners in the area.

23 I am currently in Kensington leading,
24 as part of the empowerment zone a project of block
25 organizing, which, again, involves creating

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2 requirements need to be removed from the Section 8
3 program. Case closed.

4 And, finally, you know, PHA just
5 needs to withdraw Section 8 authorization from
6 landlords that are out of compliance.

7 Now, I have no idea right now how
8 many properties might be problem properties within
9 Section 8.

10 I have no idea what exactly happens
11 when somebody complains about a Section 8 property.
12 I was interested in the Philadelphia Inquirer --

13 CHAIRMAN COHEN: We are told
14 nothing.

15 MR. SCHWARTZ: Well, I was intrigued
16 in the Inquirer story yesterday about this, that it
17 did end with somebody being evicted from a Section 8
18 property, with the neighborhood surrounding it --
19 this was in South Philadelphia -- having a little
20 party. So somewhere somebody got an eviction.

21 But, certainly, if I were sitting
22 there, as I was, the questions that I would ask PHA
23 when you meet with them is, you know, what is the
24 procedure for a neighbor who is angry about some
25 particular piece of behavior for, first, finding out

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2 in Section 8 who they should talk to, what is the
3 procedure that PHA follows, and what is the
4 consequence?

5 And when they give you rules that
6 they say they abide by, the next question is, how
7 many times have you invoked this?

8 How many times have people been
9 evicted as a result of bad behavior? How many times
10 have people been penalized? Has there ever been a
11 Section 8 landlord removed from the program for
12 inadequate management of their properties? Those
13 are the questions that would get at the facts of
14 this.

15 And if you determine that these
16 systems are not working properly -- I say this as
17 someone who has spent my whole life fighting for
18 low-income people -- in my view you have every damn
19 right to stop it and change those systems.

20 And, by the way, the people that are
21 angriest about this are the people themselves who
22 live near and in these properties.

23 The toughest leases in the city that
24 have been proposed are those that have been advanced
25 by residents of PHA, and residents of Section 8

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2 properties who themselves don't want to be living
3 surrounded by drug dealing and the rest of it.

4 I was happy to have been in Virginia
5 Wilk's apartment when Jack Kemp came to town, back
6 in 1989, to listen to Virginia Wilk tell Jack Kemp
7 that her major problem in Richard Allen was drug
8 dealing.

9 And Jack Kemp went back to Washington
10 as HUD Secretary and sent a memo out to all public
11 housing authorities saying they had to deal with
12 drug dealing.

13 It began here not from a political
14 leader, not from a conservative, not from the
15 rednecks, or whatever, but from Virginia Wilk, a
16 leader in the Richard Allen Housing Project who was
17 sick and tired of living with drug dealing.

18 So being for the poor doesn't mean
19 you have to be for incivility. And the poor will be
20 the first to say that.

21 So let's start on the basis of what
22 we are calling quality of life, I am on the same
23 side as those who feel we have to enforce proper
24 codes. And these are some principles you might
25 bring to bear.

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2 Now, where I part company is in the
3 application of all of this to whole categories of
4 people.

5 I am responsible, because of the way
6 the financing of housing worked during my tenure,
7 for the construction, probably, of more rental
8 housing units in the city of anybody else. I don't
9 know.

10 It just worked out that tax credits
11 and Section -- PHA financing, and the rest of it,
12 made rental properties a far more economically
13 viable way to proceed than home ownership. But
14 let's look at the two facts involved in that.

15 At the beginning of my term, a woman
16 named Cushing DelBare, who was the National Director
17 of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and a
18 first Director of the Housing Association of
19 Delaware Valley back in the 1960s, was commissioned
20 by the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia to
21 do a study on affordable housing in Philadelphia.

22 And what she concluded is that there
23 were 100,000 people in Philadelphia who could not
24 afford more than \$125 a month rent. And there were
25 only 5,000 housing units available at that rent, and

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2 Because I guess I feel a little offended. Because I
3 grew up near enough to New York to say that I lived
4 there. And the only people who can afford to be
5 homeowners in New York are the Rockefellers. So
6 everybody rents in New York.

7 But the top rental concentration in
8 the City of Philadelphia is that impoverished slum
9 called Rittenhouse Square. The second one is called
10 Wynnefield. The third is Rittenhouse Square.

11 The fourth is Walnut Hill, which is
12 more middle class. And those rental units I know
13 are some of the -- there is an example of a number
14 of rental buildings that were in terrible shape
15 before I became director, and were in much better
16 shape and managed properly afterwards. Because we
17 invested a lot of money in fixing those up.

18 But then we are back to Washington
19 Square, to Bustleton in the Northeast, to Washington
20 Square, to Somerton, to Franklin Town.

21 You really have to get around to the
22 15th census tract before you come into North
23 Philadelphia at all. Strawberry Mansion.

24 So the issue here is not rental
25 versus home ownership, per se, unless you are going

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2 to say that all these people who live in Rittenhouse
3 Square and Wynnefield and Walnut Hill are
4 irresponsible.

5 The issue is the income level that
6 people are in fact living on and what they can
7 afford, and some level of irresponsibility that may
8 occur in rental housing.

9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Can I just ask you
10 one question?

11 On the percentage of rental housing,
12 do your figures include large apartments or small
13 apartment buildings?

14 Because I think here the issue
15 specifically, as I gather being raised, is the
16 rental of houses, generally, in blocks, say, row
17 houses.

18 It is not a concern about the
19 apartment units, you know, where there is a regular
20 apartment building. The concerns seemed to be about
21 the existence of rental housing in row housing.

22 MR. SCHWARTZ: Well, these statistics
23 merely go through an aggregate of rental buildings.

24 But I am saying the statements I
25 listened to not only this morning, but for 15 years,

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2 welfare. And now we have 67,000, according to the
3 Department of Welfare. But that's still a huge
4 percentage of the population of the city.

5 I have not spent much time on housing
6 since I left the government. Because the problems
7 that you are trying to solve, frankly, can't be
8 solved through housing.

9 I spent more time on it than the two
10 of you, and I speak from personal experience.

11 We are dealing with a city that has
12 400,000 adults without high school diplomas. We are
13 dealing with a city in which in two years, 20
14 percent of every person on welfare is supposed to
15 spend 20 hours a week doing something to justify
16 their check.

17 Now, there is a little time bomb
18 ticking. And, in five years, they are going to have
19 no money whatsoever.

20 And you know something? At that
21 point you better pray that we have Section 8
22 certificates. Because the only thing that will save
23 those people from being thrown out of their homes,
24 if they are not hired by anybody, is the fact that
25 the federal government will guarantee their rent.

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2 And this is not some kind of theory.

3 In 1991, there were 1,000 foreclosures in West Oak
4 Lane of homeowners.

5 And I got a call in the middle of the
6 year asking about whether or not people were given
7 homes with too lenient standards for mortgages.

8 What happened? They were, in fact,
9 encouraged to move to West Oak Lane with pretty good
10 deals for home ownership. The economic tanked, they
11 got -- some got into other problems, and they left
12 their homes.

13 Now under welfare reform what's going
14 to happen is this: If people lose all their income,
15 the only guarantee right now they would have is if
16 they are in public housing or in Section 8, that
17 will pay their rent.

18 If they get a home under, for
19 example, this existing City Settlement Program,
20 which is making home ownership more affordable, and
21 they lose their income, nothing will protect them.

22 So there is no solution to this
23 problem within the circle that you are sitting.

24 The solution lies at looking what the
25 hell is helping with jobs, education, welfare, and

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2 the rest of it.

3 And, finally, it is sheer
4 demagoguery. Everyone's attention has been focused
5 against the poor. That is what's happened.

6 And this hearing was civil. But I
7 read the reports of went on in the Northeast
8 meetings around this.

9 And it wasn't people who, in fact, I
10 thought made a fairly reasonable presentation. And
11 it wasn't you, Councilman Kenney. But there were
12 several state legislators up there that, frankly,
13 made speeches that were the most demagogic that I
14 have ever read in the City of Philadelphia.

15 And if you want to whip up the kind
16 of sentiment, in the climate that we are living, you
17 are playing with fire.

18 So I spent more hours and more time
19 in the last ten years dealing with precisely the
20 problem of building community among rental,
21 homeowner, and PHA residents than almost anyone I
22 know.

23 And I am all for evicting people on
24 bad behavior. But the problem that is ticking in
25 this city is that one in five of us is about to be

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2 thrown out of their home because they don't have
3 work. And we have a state that is saying that they
4 are not going to allow them to be educated.

5 And if you think we had a problem of
6 homelessness in the 1980s, when I was here, you wait
7 two years, and you dabble around all this nonsense
8 without looking at that, and you see what kind of
9 neighbors you have on your left.

10 I thank you for your time.

11 (Applause.)

12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilman Kenney.

13 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: While I understand
14 and appreciate the fervor in which you delivered
15 your statement, I would like to go back to some of
16 the discussion you started earlier.

17 While I recognize that none of us in
18 this room are responsible for state welfare reform
19 that was done by the Ridge Administration and by the
20 legislature, which many Philadelphia legislators
21 opposed, vigorously opposed --

22 MR. SCHWARTZ: Not the ones who led
23 the meeting that I am talking about. They were very
24 vigorously for it.

25 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: There are

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2 individuals who I have been, quote, unquote,
3 associated with, who fought valiantly and gave
4 tremendous oration and debate on the issue of
5 welfare reform.

6 And I am not ashamed to say Senator
7 Fumo was probably the staunchest opponent in
8 Harrisburg on Governor Ridge's welfare reform.

9 MR. SCHWARTZ: I agree with that.

10 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: The issue that you
11 raised initially, however, was one of fostering --
12 and something you have been in the forefront of --
13 fostering community participation and involvement --

14 MR. SCHWARTZ: And civic
15 responsibility.

16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: -- and civic
17 responsibility amongst all the neighbors.

18 Let me tell you, I will just give you
19 a short vignette of what I have dealt with when it
20 comes to some Section 8 landlords. And this is
21 something that really pits neighbor against
22 neighbor.

23 There is a Section 8 landlord in
24 South Philadelphia who thinks it is appropriate to
25 move tenants into a property at midnight on a

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2 Tuesday in a van.

3 Now, normally people move, my
4 experience, at least -- not normally, my
5 experience -- has been that people move into a
6 property on a Saturday morning, you know, in the
7 daytime, with a truck, and people come in and move
8 in their property.

9 What I find happens with that kind of
10 circumstance is that the morning after the tenant
11 moves in -- and if it is a family of a different
12 race, the problem is even exacerbated more.

13 There are a few neighbors in the
14 street who, for want of a better term, I will call
15 knuckleheads, racists, people who don't want black
16 people anywhere near them. And that is a small
17 number of people on that street.

18 There is also a larger number of
19 people on that street who, even though they may not
20 be comfortable totally with the situation, because
21 of their age and their life experience and their own
22 ignorance, are willing to try to make things work.

23 But what happens is that the
24 knuckleheads start doing some things and saying some
25 things that are inappropriate. The people who are

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2 the tenants in the property feel isolated and alone
3 and, of course, will reach out to friends and family
4 to come and support them because they feel under
5 siege.

6 And what I wind up with are two
7 warring camps of people who are doing nothing but
8 screaming epithets at each other and not trying to
9 get along.

10 Now, I don't suggest we should be
11 told in advance who is moving in where. But if I
12 could get some prior notice, in an effort to get
13 together the leadership of the community, the
14 political leadership, and the decent neighbors in
15 the street, to have an opportunity to go to the
16 Oregon Diner, for example, and to sit around a table
17 with coffee, and at least people have an opportunity
18 to feel each other, to touch each other, to talk to
19 each other before the warring camps start.

20 Whenever I have a problem that's
21 relative to Section 8 or to any other type of rental
22 or nonrental ownership, people who own a home, and
23 there is conflict between people, either intersocial
24 conflict or racial conflict, the first person I call
25 is Kevin Vaughan.

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2 And I say, "Kevin, do me favor. Send
3 one of your people down or go down yourself and try
4 to assess the situation. Give me an idea of what
5 you think the problems are so we can try to address
6 these things primarily so people don't get hurt and
7 also so people don't do stupid things and wind up in
8 jail, despite their ignorance."

9 That kind of prior involvement, to
10 allow people who live in the neighborhood or who
11 have never experienced this before, to see that this
12 tenant may work as a dietician in a hospital
13 somewhere, or may be a teacher, or may be involved
14 in the community, who may have grown up in South
15 Philadelphia or grown up wherever it is that
16 neighborhood happens to be, to have a chance to at
17 least experience each other a little bit before
18 people are put into this isolated camp, surrounded
19 by people who are different than them.

20 If I could get that kind of
21 opportunity -- and I have talked to Kevin about this
22 a number of times -- that we could do that in
23 advance, maybe we could head off some of the ugly
24 situations that have surrounded Brighet Ward and
25 some of the other people in the city.

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2 And I guess that's the kind of
3 involvement that I don't think PHA has been about.
4 And that's the kind of detailed attention, paying
5 attention to detail, that PHA has not been about and
6 that the city has not been about.

7 We just so often throw people in the
8 shark tank and say, "Here. Here is your key, here
9 is your house, good luck."

10 And I think that between life skill
11 issues and counseling issues and neighborhood
12 interaction issues, we can resolve a lot of these
13 problems and take the ugliness away, if we have some
14 opportunities to do it first.

15 And that, I think, is what I would
16 like to have from you as we move forward in this, is
17 some ideas on how we do that.

18 I can't make people stop hating.
19 There are certain elements of our community, both
20 black and white and otherwise, who will hate to the
21 day they close the lid on their heads and bury
22 them. They will hate.

23 But there is also the vast majority
24 of the people in this city who I have confidence
25 don't feel that way, black and white and other, and

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2 Hispanic and Asian, who just want to live in peace
3 and get along.

4 And given the opportunity to do that,
5 they will. They do it every day. They come to
6 work, they interact in office buildings, they have
7 lunch together, they use public transportation
8 together, they see each other on the street.

9 We have to be able to do that in our
10 neighborhoods. Because what it does is, it isolates
11 people, it drives people out, it makes people ugly
12 and brings out the worst of human nature.

13 And we can do all this, despite
14 whether it is Section 8 or rental or ownership, if
15 we just have the opportunity to try to do it.

16 MR. SCHWARTZ: Well, Councilman,
17 first, I agree with you. Let's start there.

18 Secondly, all of the work that I have
19 been doing for the last seven years around these
20 social contracts has been aimed to do exactly what
21 you are talking about.

22 I find it interesting in the American
23 Street Corridor area, where I am doing precisely
24 this now, years ago Peter Benson, who now writes for
25 the paper wrote a book called "White Town about

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2 Kensington."

3 I am now sitting in a neighborhood
4 which is about 40 percent white, 40 percent
5 Hispanic, and 20 percent black, and around the room
6 are block captains representing all those, and we
7 are talking about how you make a neighborhood clean,
8 safe, economically viable and a decent place to
9 raise our kids.

10 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Universal goals.

11 MR. SCHWARTZ: Right. Now, that's
12 what I have been doing. And if you want my help in
13 doing it, you have got it. Because I am doing it
14 anyway.

15 I have to say, I agree with you in
16 part. It has been very difficult for me to get the
17 kind of support from the city that would really make
18 this process work. I am giving it another shot this
19 year.

20 There has been some skepticism about
21 it. And perhaps I am not in this political camp.

22 But despite that, I have kept it
23 going. And we, actually, at this point are doing it
24 nationally. I got a national grant from the
25 National Endowment for the Humanities. I put

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2 together a book around what we have been doing. And
3 it is happening in other parts of the country. So I
4 feel very strongly.

5 And I specifically felt, having come
6 through four years of developing rental housing in
7 the city, that this was critical to make it work.

8 And, you know, when Southwark was
9 conceived, the guy who did it in HUD, Kirk Gray,
10 local guy, brought me to New York. He insisted that
11 even though I wasn't PHA, that I be involved in the
12 negotiations.

13 His vision was that it not just be a
14 bricks and mortar deal, but a model for community
15 and opportunity for people. And so I saw America
16 Works then, and all these other things. And some of
17 the ideas that Senator Fumo brought to the city are
18 making that a reality.

19 But it had to begin with the
20 willingness on the part of the Queen Village
21 community to work together. And they did have that
22 willingness, most of them. A few didn't, but most
23 of them did.

24 And so when Queen Village came to me
25 in 1993 and said, "Look, this thing is unraveling,"

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2 could I help, and I had these ideas, I deliberately
3 went into that neighborhood, and took some shots for
4 doing it, because of the commitment to the principle
5 that you have advanced.

6 It comes down to something real
7 simple. Two wrongs don't make a right. And it is
8 wrong to be racist. It is wrong to say because
9 somebody doesn't have a lot money, that means they
10 are a bad person. And it is wrong to put up with
11 nonsense in the name of helping the poor.

12 And these are common sense principles
13 that most of us, I agree, share, and some don't.
14 But we if can bring the people in the neighborhoods
15 who are committed to constructive community building
16 together, then that creates the wedge we need.

17 So if you need my help in those
18 things, you have got it. All I am saying, you
19 didn't create welfare reform. I just saw "Volcano"
20 last night; you know, the tape of "Volcano."

21 Well, the people in LA in that movie
22 didn't create the volcano, but at some point they
23 had to respond to it.

24 And these other things that I am
25 describing are, to me, the volcano that in fact is

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2 about what this hearing might look like.

3 But I have to say, having been here
4 during the period of transition, this Council stands
5 as a great example of what can happen when people of
6 diverse origins and points of view come together and
7 have to make due with one another.

8 Yes, it started with fist fights.
9 But by the end of the decade the people who were
10 fighting each other were campaigning for one other.
11 And that has continued.

12 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But there are
13 folks out there that are not here, that are not
14 present, who are trying to foster something, another
15 type of climate.

16 We needed this hearing in order to
17 take that away from those individuals and start down
18 another road.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you very
21 much.

22 We need a four-minute break because
23 the stenographer needs to rest her fingers just a
24 little bit and change.

25

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2 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Assuming that you're
3 right with respect to your dire predictions of the
4 results of welfare reform, 'cause most everybody
5 agrees with you, in light of that, wouldn't it be
6 very important to have a strengthened Section 8 in
7 effect if those terrible predictions come true?

8 MR. SCHWARTZ: Oh, yes. I think --

9 COUNCILMAN COHEN: You're not
10 advocating that we are wasting our time here in
11 trying to not only preserve Section 8, but
12 strengthen it, but to also deal with the problems
13 that the program -- maybe other -- maybe ordinary
14 rental programs also create that problem.

15 You know, every time there's a
16 landlord-tenant relationship, there is the great
17 possibility of a lot of things happening that are
18 not good: the possibility of the landlord milking
19 the property, the possibility of a tenant not
20 behaving properly. Add that to the neighbors, and
21 you always have a situation which can be
22 difficult.

23 But it seems to me we've got to work to
24 strengthen that program, to deal with the people
25 you said had complaints that they brought to your

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2 office, where you got to go back to them
3 immediately to evict if they were tenants, or to
4 remove them from the program if they were
5 landlords.

6 MR. SCHWARTZ: All I'm saying -- I
7 don't argue with that. I spent a good number of
8 years doing it. And the work I'm doing in these
9 block clubs is covering the water front of these
10 issues as well, and I'm here. If I didn't think
11 it was relevant, I wouldn't have come. I don't
12 show up here a lot, right?

13 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Yeah, 'cause we
14 don't want to feel we're --

15 MR. SCHWARTZ: All I'm saying is that
16 there is a tendency -- and I was part of it, I did
17 this for four years -- to see a housing solution
18 to poverty. And there isn't.

19 COUNCILMAN COHEN: But there is a
20 solution as to how those agencies charged with the
21 responsibility for housing should be acting.

22 MR. SCHWARTZ: No question about that.
23 All I'm saying is that the more people that are
24 living in desperate circumstances, the more we're
25 going to have problems in the City, even if the

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2 programs are well-managed.

3 I mean, we had four thousand people in
4 homeless shelters in 1985; I think it's 14 hundred
5 now. What will it be two years from now? I'm
6 just, again, using the opportunity to sound the
7 alarm about this particular problem.

8 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Well, on these
9 (unintelligible), you're right.

10 (Talking over each other.)

11 MR. SCHWARTZ: I mean, this all began
12 with Jay Lamont writing a piece in the paper and
13 then going up to the Northeast and saying, Hey,
14 folks, in the next years, the way housing patterns
15 in the Northeast are going to go, all the middle
16 class are going to leave and the poor people are
17 going to be here. That's -- I mean that
18 summarized really what he said. And he gave
19 economic incentives for it and whatever.

20 And I'm now at the point and have been
21 for some time -- what do we to try to help people
22 not be poor? And there are some things we can do,
23 and there are some things we have to fight the
24 state over. And that's what I'm spending my time
25 on.

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2 And, yes, housing is an important
3 component of that mix. I wouldn't have spent the
4 number of years I did on it along with Harrisburg
5 and the rest of it --

6 COUNCILMAN COHEN: You mentioned
7 working in Kensington.

8 MR. SCHWARTZ: Right.

9 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Do you have any
10 familiarity about the situation I discussed?

11 MR. SCHWARTZ: I didn't see the story,
12 Councilman; I'll have to look at it. I do know --
13 in general, since I didn't see this story -- that
14 there are definitely times when you put a house up
15 in a neighborhood that is perceived to be
16 undesirable and you can't get people to come.

17 Now, I'd have to look -- the one
18 situation I remember was not so much -- well, it
19 was West Kensington, it was the poorest
20 neighborhood in Kensington, and one block was
21 overrun by drug dealers. I mean, you --

22 COUNCILMAN COHEN: And this was
23 supposed to be what they referred to in the
24 article as "the other Kensington," the Kensington
25 that's not been identified recently as being beset

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2 with prostitutes, with all kinds of drug-dealing
3 problems.

4 MR. SCHWARTZ: Well, okay, but if the
5 press -- there's no question, you know, we all
6 look at the real estate market and houses.

7 If, day after day, there are huge
8 stories about prostitution and drug-dealing and
9 the rest of it, somebody who's looking for housing
10 may not think that neighborhood is exactly the
11 first place they would go. So, you know, you have
12 to try to put out the positive side.

13 The Kensington South neighborhood where
14 I happen to be now, I think, is characterized by
15 an extraordinarily high degree of stability and
16 harmony among the people who live there.

17 And it's really exciting to see since
18 this area is historically supposed to be, you
19 know, "White Town" and all of that. These are
20 people who have lived there for years and worked
21 together. The same thing is happening in Norris
22 Square.

23 So, you know, we have to find ways that
24 the positive values of these neighborhoods get out
25 there.

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2 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Well, we hope you'll
3 remain very active in this field.

4 MR. SCHWARTZ: You don't have to worry
5 about that.

6 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Because we are very
7 concerned that the Mayor chose not to be here
8 today, at the time when most people are here; that
9 the Public Housing Authority either decided or was
10 ordered by the Mayor not to appear; that HUD seems
11 to have been influenced by the Mayor not to
12 appear; that the Philadelphia Board of Realtors
13 suddenly announced that, even though they had
14 already committed themselves to coming, that they
15 would not be coming; that many others that were on
16 the list went -- some of them did finally come,
17 but many of them stayed away despite that, as you
18 could see when the hearing started, this room was
19 jam-packed.

20 Now, why -- yeah, there's a realtor
21 here but nobody representing the Philadelphia
22 Board of Realtors.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There is someone
24 here from --

25 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Oh, that's good.

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2 We're very pleased to see that.

3 Now, if there's anybody from any of the
4 other agencies who's prepared to testify, agencies
5 that I listed as having changed their minds after
6 they agreed, we think, because of requests from
7 the Mayor's Office or people associated with the
8 Mayor, please identify yourself.

9 We've got no indication that PHA is
10 prepared to testify. Is there any change in
11 that?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

13 MR. SCHWARTZ: Well, let me just make a
14 final comment, then, about my view of that.
15 Obviously a private group, the realtors have to
16 figure out what they want to do in life.

17 But my feeling as Housing Director was,
18 from the day I walked in, that we are paid by the
19 taxpayers, and we owed it to the taxpayers to tell
20 them what we're doing. And if we didn't know, we
21 needed to find out.

22 And for the first six months, I had to
23 sort out a lot of information that --

24 COUNCILMAN COHEN: May we suggest to
25 the Mayor that he hire you as a consultant?

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2 MR. SCHWARTZ: Well, I'm not sure
3 you're going to get too far with that proposal.

4 But the other piece of it is, yeah, I
5 made some very controversial calls on some
6 projects, the Christian Street one, and there were
7 some angry meetings. I never turned down a
8 request to go to them, never turned down a request
9 for a hearing. I went to all of them.

10 And that's the job. And if you're not
11 willing to do that, then that merely conveys to
12 the constituents that you probably are doing
13 something wrong, and it makes matters worse. So I
14 think it's unfortunate that we don't have the same
15 commitment operating now.

16 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I think that's true.

17 MR. SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you very
19 much.

20 Councilwoman Miller?

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank you, Mr.
22 Chair.

23 (Unidentified person addresses
24 Councilwoman Miller.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: No questions.

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2 COUNCILMAN COHEN: No questions. She's
3 going to make a statement.

4 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Right.

5 COUNCILMAN COHEN: She has to leave, I
6 understand.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Yes, I do. I
8 have a meeting at 4.

9 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Right.

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And I've been out
11 at a district meeting at a protest all afternoon,
12 but I really wanted to be here.

13 I just want to make a statement for the
14 record. You know, I go to community meetings
15 every week where someone gets up to talk about
16 neighborhood decline and points to the lack of
17 individual values as the root cause.

18 The problems in our neighborhood are
19 complex and need to be addressed collectively by
20 us all. We do a disservice when we try to blame
21 the enormous communitykind on one set of people.

22 I support the Section 8 program and I
23 know it is not perfect. The purpose of these
24 hearings, I hope, is to look rationally at this
25 program and try to improve it. It if needs to be

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2 changed, then let's change it, but I will not
3 support the scapegoating of any class of people.

4 As a society, we need to provide this
5 subsidy to low-income families. The pressures of
6 homelessness have led to some changes in program
7 intake and policy and should not be driven by such
8 unrelenting pressures.

9 The Council's focus on nuisance crimes
10 is an attempt to return to the old values system
11 that everyone talks about, where everyone swept
12 their front sidewalk and spoke to their neighbors
13 when they passed them on the street.

14 Personally, I think these types of
15 community attitudes will not be legislated back
16 into existence but will only come about through
17 organizing and educating a block on a neighborhood
18 level.

19 Individual Section 8 tenants, just like
20 any other tenant or neighbor, need to feel to be a
21 part of the community they live in. We can modify
22 policies within the Section 8 program to address
23 some of the deficiencies. But, as a Council, we
24 need to find a way to legislate that we live
25 together as neighbors.

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2 And that's my statement.

3 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you very much,
4 Councilwoman Miller.

5 Now, does the panel before me consist
6 of Sabrina Casin -- I may not have the
7 pronunciations right -- Habeebah Ali and April
8 Jackson?

9 MS. ALI: Yes, Mr. Cohen.

10 COUNCILMAN COHEN: You can proceed in
11 whatever order you choose to.

12 MS. ALI: Miss Casin will be going
13 first. Thank you.

14 COUNCILMAN COHEN: All right, thank
15 you.

16 Just always identify yourself for the
17 record before you start.

18 MS. CASIN: I certainly will.

19 Good afternoon, Council Members, ladies
20 and gentlemen. My name is Sabrina Casin, and I'm
21 the mother of four and the grandmother of one, and
22 I'm a former resident of a scattered-site housing
23 program named "Dignity Housing," which was founded
24 out of the National Union of the Homeless, and I
25 am now currently the Board Chair of Dignity

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2 Housing.

3 Based upon the Fair Housing Act of
4 1968, it prohibits discrimination in housing
5 because of race, color, national origin, religion
6 and sex.

7 I was told upon entering Dignity
8 Housing that I would have to attend a six-week
9 orientation program to help to do my short-term
10 and long-term goals and my life skills plan, which
11 I completed, and I moved into Dignity Housing.

12 I moved into the Mt. Airy section of
13 the City of Philadelphia which had the highest
14 rate of HUD-foreclosed units in the City of
15 Philadelphia. When I moved in, I watched my
16 neighbors watch me to see if I was going to be a
17 responsible adult and an asset to my community. I
18 became involved with our block club and I helped
19 to plan our block parties.

20 I also found employment, and it was
21 very important, because I was told that I was
22 moving into a working-class community that I could
23 learn from and also teach them some things. I was
24 amazed at how many times people knocked on my
25 doors to ask me what it was like to be homeless

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2 and do you know how to access certain agencies.

3 So I did have something to bring to my community.

4 I lived in this home for six years and then I
5 moved out.

6 I will continue to fight for others to
7 have the right to live and learn wherever they
8 choose, based upon the law of the land of the home
9 of the free and the brave.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you very much.

12 Please proceed.

13 MS. JACKSON: Good afternoon,
14 Councilman, my name is April Jackson, a
15 representative of "Rays of Hope."

16 My name is April Jackson, I'm a single
17 parent of five. My life hasn't been an easy one.
18 I'm a recovering person of five years. And by the
19 grace of God in his mercy, I am thankful to have
20 another chance -- I need to say that again --
21 another chance at my life and my children's life.

22 I came to Philadelphia homeless but
23 hopeful to start again and to make a difference.
24 Doors have been closed in my face and also have
25 been open to myself and my family, and we are

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2 the hope that they have given to us, to know that
3 we know that there are people who still do care
4 for one another in times of need. Miss Ali, to
5 me, knows she is her brother's keeper. And the
6 name speaks for itself, "Rays of Hope."

7 I am now employed. I'm in a five-year
8 housing subsidized program, I'm hoping to become a
9 homeowner within that five years. My children are
10 doing very well in school. My oldest daughter is
11 in Upward Bound. She is also in Philadelphia
12 Futures. Doors just continue to be opened to
13 myself and to my family, the ones that were once
14 closed to us.

15 We thank you, Rays of Hope, for keeping
16 hope alive for all the people you assist year-
17 round.

18 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you.

19 Now Habeebah Ali.

20 MS. ALI: Thank you, Councilman. Good
21 evening to Council. I do understand that there
22 are some Council listening in on this session
23 though they're not able to be actually here in the
24 room, so I would like to say good evening to the
25 Councilmen and -women of the City of Philadelphia.

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2 COUNCILMAN COHEN: One of the problems
3 is that this is a very heavy scheduling time for
4 City Council, and we have any number of matters
5 that we're dealing with simultaneously. Different
6 Council members have different responsibilities,
7 and that's why you see the buzzing around as
8 they're preparing for sessions for tomorrow and
9 Thursday.

10 We apologize, but there's no other way
11 we could manage to --

12 MS. ALI: I understand. I'm just very
13 grateful that you had the courage to hold this
14 hearing.

15 I would like to say good afternoon and
16 good evening to everyone in chambers. My name is
17 Habeebah Ali. And that is spelled, for the
18 record, H-A-B-E-E-B-A-H. Ali, A-L-I, like the
19 boxer Muhammad.

20 My name is Habeebah Ali, and I entered
21 subsidized housing a few years ago as a result of
22 having to flee my home due to domestic violence.
23 My choices were: homelessness, living in the
24 abuse, or living on the streets of Philadelphia
25 with four children. I chose the shelter system.

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2 Homelessness in the City of
3 Philadelphia is a horrendous experience. At the
4 time of becoming homeless, I worked for the City
5 of Philadelphia in the Revenue Department,
6 handling hundreds of thousands of dollars by day
7 and having only to fall asleep in a shelter with
8 my children by night.

9 Two of my four children failed school
10 that year due to being in transitional living:
11 renting rooms, staying with relatives and in the
12 shelter systems. My children that year went to
13 four separate schools. That is the reason why
14 they failed, because going from pillar to post and
15 being a responsible mother, I had to put them in
16 the schools wherever we were living at that point
17 in time.

18 Section 8 subsidized housing allowed my
19 family stability in our lives. Today we live in
20 Dignity Housing. I have become the advocate for
21 decent housing. Not everyone can afford home
22 ownership. Some people have to be renters.
23 Section 8 is a much needed program in our region.

24 I would like to shed light at this time
25 on the issue of clusterizing people that live in

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2 subsidized house. Poor people in subsidized
3 housing cannot, should not, and will not be
4 clusterized in the City of Philadelphia; nor the
5 State of Pennsylvania; and, may I add, the nation
6 as a whole.

7 No clusterization for subsidized
8 housing, no concentration camps for poor people.
9 Though I have been able to enhance my life, and,
10 as you heard, Miss Jackson referred to a program
11 called "Rays of Hope," I am the founder and the
12 director of Rays of Hope Transitional Housing
13 Program. And although we have had several success
14 stories, we have put, to date, six families
15 through transitional housing that have all moved
16 on to long-term homes.

17 We've had a property in the Northeast,
18 in the Burholme section; we've had a property at
19 76th and City Line Avenue. Through the Department
20 of Housing and Urban Development's lease-to-own
21 program that subsidized nonprofit, CDCs can lease
22 properties for a dollar and run families through
23 them in transitional housing and then allow them
24 to come on into the Section 8 subsidized program.

25 Miss Jackson never lived in Rays of

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2 Hope. Rays of Hope was able to assist her family
3 with the identifying subsidy so that her and her
4 children would not have to revisit homelessness,
5 As she indicated, after being successful in her
6 substance recovery and gaining her children back
7 from the Social Services programs.

8 People need subsidized housing. We're
9 being cut from the government, we're being
10 slashed. We have to hold on to something. I
11 understand what self-sufficiency is. As I said,
12 when I became homeless, I worked for the City of
13 Philadelphia; I wasn't a welfare queen -- not to
14 say that welfare is not needed, as it was for my
15 mother who raised ten responsible children on the
16 Department of Welfare.

17 There are still going to be poor people
18 in this nation, and there's something called the
19 "working poor." Everyone who works cannot afford
20 a mortgage. There's not a bank who's going to
21 give poor and low-income people working two
22 minimum-wage jobs a mortgage.

23 The Councilman wanted to know why these
24 houses in Kensington were not being sold. Well,
25 perhaps the banks are not going to give these poor

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2 people mortgages. That may be it, okay?

3 So I am pleading with Council today to
4 not allow clusterization of subsidies. That is a
5 failure. People need to be able to live in mixed
6 communities, and I'm not talking racially mixed,
7 I'm not speak of religiously mixed or your
8 sexual-preference-mixed. People need to live in a
9 mixed community being that it is a composite of
10 whatever consists of a community.

11 Let us have the same opportunities that
12 the people had when the gates of Ellis Island were
13 open, let us continue to make America all that it
14 can be. Our ancestors, yours and mine, worked
15 diligently for this country.

16 Now, of course, subsidies and monies
17 are drying up all over the place. No one wants to
18 live on welfare because you can't make it from day
19 to day on that anyway. It was never enough, but
20 at least your child had medical, at least you did
21 have food stamps. Now you have to work for a
22 check, and the person sitting next to you that's
23 making 8, 9 dollars an hour, he's feeling
24 threatened because this welfare recipient on this
25 workfare may be taking my job any day.

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2 We don't have anything left but
3 subsidized housing. And we don't want the poor in
4 this city to rise up against the have's and the
5 have-not's. But human beings are survivors, and
6 people will do what they have to do. I'm a mother
7 of four, and you're going to do what you have to
8 do to feed your babies.

9 We're going to do what we have to do.
10 We're not squirrels. We can't live out here in
11 these elements. The shelters are closed in the
12 summer to people, and the doors to the shelters
13 will soon be closed in the winter.

14 We don't have to be rocket scientists
15 or Ph.D.'s to know what time it is in the politics
16 of Philadelphia. I am pleading with Council to
17 take another look.

18 I am a participant of the Million Woman
19 March. I know that millions of dollars came into
20 the City during that weekend. Now, the City says
21 they can't seem to find money to open shelter
22 doors and expand shelter beds. Well, I say that
23 there's a large pocket of money that came here
24 that nobody was counting on that is here. We have
25 to do what we have to do.

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2 I believe the seventh commandment is
3 "Love Thy Neighbor as Thyself." When are we
4 going to, in this City of brotherly love, begin to
5 show some love and compassion and have some
6 humanability (sic) about us? Where is the
7 humanity for us?

8 So I know that your plates are full and
9 that you have large tasks ahead of you, but you
10 will have even larger issues. You can put all the
11 gates up around City Hall that you want, but the
12 families with the children, if we have nowhere
13 else to go, we will come and reside here. We're
14 going to do what we have to do.

15 We are citizens of this country, we are
16 citizens of this City. We vote, we pay taxes when
17 we're able to. We may not be paying property
18 taxes but we pay taxes on every dollar that we
19 spend. And I think that is paying taxes.

20 So I'm just asking you, everyone is not
21 making 80, 70, 60 thousand dollars a year. Some
22 of us are making 18, 20, and less.

23 The welfare reform is hurting people.
24 And maybe after a few years, things will settle
25 down, but subsidized housing, whether it's PHA or

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2 Section 8, is something that has to continue.

3 I'm asking City Council that when
4 whomever suggests it and brings it before you that
5 they want to clusterize people, that they don't
6 want people to have a right to live where they
7 choose, which not only is a human right, but I
8 believe it's a right that we have in our
9 Constitution, that you stand up and be the men and
10 women that we thought that you were when we voted
11 and appointed you, and stand up for our rights and
12 make the positive votes.

13 And, remember, the 1999 elections are
14 coming around again, so we're looking at your
15 results. And more people are going to vote now
16 because we're not going to let what happened to us
17 happen again. We're not going to sit in the house
18 because it may be raining or inconvenient.

19 We realize by us not coming out to the
20 polls, that we are suffering. People are going to
21 be voting in numbers that they haven't in a very
22 long time, so I hope that all you ladies and
23 gentlemen are doing the right things.

24 Thank you for your time.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I hope, from your
3 mouth to God's ear, I hope that that happens. And
4 I hope that people do understand that they have to
5 come out when the voting time is here and that
6 they will vote.

7 Because, let me tell you, because of
8 the lack of voting, because we have stayed away, a
9 lot of things are happening to us that would never
10 have happened before.

11 And, let me tell you something, there
12 will be no gates around City Hall. There will be
13 no gates around City Hall, not as long as I'm here
14 and as long as Dave Cohen is here and a lot of us
15 that are here, there will be no gates around City
16 Hall to keep out the poor.

17 But I think what these hearings are
18 accomplishing today is that we have put the debate
19 on another plane. We have taken it away from the
20 demagogues and the individuals who believe that
21 poor people are the cause of every wrong that is
22 out there. And I think we have begun to begin the
23 discourse on the right road.

24 We will have a policy. We will push
25 for a plan that really takes into consideration

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2 integration and not ghettoization of people.

3 That's what we're looking for.

4 The plan is to integrate into society,
5 into the City, all of us. We're all
6 Philadelphians. We have to become one. We have
7 to make sure that people are not ghettoized once
8 again.

9 So I think your statements are
10 fantastic, very good.

11 Is there anyone else?

12 MS. CASIN: I'd like to just add that
13 when you are making decisions around poor people's
14 lives, if there is going to be such a committee
15 that you come to the people that will be affected
16 by the changes that will be made and at least have
17 them sit around the table and help to make the
18 decisions on their lives.

19 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Do you like the
20 first step that occurred today? Do you ever
21 remember a Council hearing before that began with
22 the people testifying and where the people
23 testified all day until the very end?

24 That's today. It's a new first. We
25 hope that by devoting this day to the community

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2 and enabling it to talk, we're beginning the
3 process of seeing that new faces appear at the
4 bargaining table, and we want the community groups
5 like your own to be there when the bargaining gets
6 done.

7 There are sharp differences already
8 that have emerged. The Mayor stands for putting
9 everybody together, clusterization. You've heard
10 enough comments from the City Council Members to
11 see that a majority of City Council Members at
12 least -- I believe it will be an overwhelming
13 majority -- will be against clusterization.

14 The Mayor did not want the hearing to
15 take place today. He asked that it be postponed
16 for 30 days while he develops his plan for
17 clusterization. Today we read in newspapers that,
18 unbeknownst to any of us in City Council, the
19 Mayor has already corresponded with Congressman
20 Borsky, asking him to introduce legislation to
21 provide for clusters.

22 You heard Congressman Fattah say he's
23 dead set against it and that he's already
24 discussed the matter with Congressman Borsky.
25 We're very hopeful that that legislation will not

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2 be introduced. But if it is, we're going to need
3 your help. We can talk. But you can help
4 mobilize the community in opposition.

5 I think maybe this might be the
6 beginning of a real moving up the level of fight
7 to see that all people, regardless of their
8 income, get the basic necessities of life: food
9 shelter and what's needed to have a family live
10 not on the streets but in affordable housing. And
11 that's what we're about to do.

12 And Congressman Ortiz --

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I'm not a
14 congressman, not yet.

15 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Councilman, I mean.
16 I promoted him.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Might be. Who
18 knows?

19 COUNCILMAN COHEN: I'll tell the two
20 current congressman that I wasn't conferring -- of
21 course, there's one vacancy and maybe he'll go for
22 that.

23 But we intend to do a very serious job
24 here, but we're going to need your help. Never,
25 never depend just on politicians holding office to

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2 do anything. Sure, push us; push us to the wall
3 to make sure we do everything we can.

4 But the ultimate power rests with the
5 people. And follow Councilman Ortiz's suggestion
6 of helping to get people to understand that they
7 empower themselves every time they walk in that
8 voting booth.

9 They're saying, "We count and we've got
10 our eye on you who are holding office because
11 we're going to be ready to take action at the
12 polls the next time you run if you don't do the
13 right thing."

14 In that way, you can really begin to
15 enjoy the fruits of citizenship, which is what
16 we're all working hard to achieve.

17 Thank you. I think your three
18 statements, like Councilman Ortiz's, they were
19 very (unintelligible) statements, and I hope they
20 will act as an example for many others.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And the next
22 hearing, by the way, is December 9th, at 10
23 o'clock p.m.

24 COUNCILMAN COHEN: 10 a.m.

25 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: 10 a.m.

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2 COUNCILMAN COHEN: And Councilman Ortiz
3 is going on a very long schedule, and 10 at night
4 is just sort of the middle of the day, and he's
5 still got hours to go.

6 But that's the date when the Mayor says
7 he'll be here. And that day, the people ought to
8 be here to hear what the Mayor has to say and then
9 to have the opportunity to have the Mayor hear and
10 listen to what they have to say.

11 MS. ALI: I'd just like to add,
12 Councilman Cohen and Councilwoman Ortiz, I'm
13 sorry, I don't know this other gentleman's name.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: That's Mr. Shapiro.
15 He's an attorney for City Council.

16 MS. ALI: Okay. I am here representing
17 as a member of the Save Our Subsidized Housing
18 Coalition. And a month or so ago, we took several
19 buses to Washington, D.C., and we were very
20 instrumental in some bills that were set out to
21 voucherize Section 8. That has come to a halt.

22 I am also a member representing the
23 Delaware Valley Union of the Homeless. And we
24 will do exactly as you are suggesting, we are
25 doing that now. We are mobilizing in the streets

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2 because we realize you only represent the numbers,
3 but we're the actual people who are relying on
4 these subsidies.

5 And I'd like to say that I'm glad to
6 see you're back amongst us, Councilman.

7 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you.

8 MS. ALI: And I was so, so thrilled at
9 the position that you took on the Ogontz Manor.
10 It gave me a new infusion of home for City
11 Council. Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you very much.
14 Keep the struggle.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN COHEN: Judith Gorsky and
17 Catherine Chavis.

18 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Please identify
19 yourselves for the record.

20 MS. CHAVIS: Hi, good afternoon. My
21 name is Catherine Chavis. I'm the President of
22 the Catherine Street Tenants Association. I want
23 to first take opportunity to thank you for
24 allowing me to testify on behalf of the residents.

25 Catherine Street Close, a 32-unit

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2 complex, was built in 1971 to provide decent and
3 affordable housing for the low- to moderate-income
4 residents. It is a diverse complex consisting of
5 many races, elderly, the handicapped, those that
6 are on their S.S.I., S.S.D., they're welfare and
7 they're working. I am one that's on my Social
8 Security disability due to an incurable illness
9 for the last two years.

10 Many other residents of Catherine
11 Street Close have lived in the neighborhood in a
12 peaceful and harmonious environment in conjunction
13 with our affluent neighbors for approximately 15
14 to 25 years.

15 Since moving to Philadelphia in the
16 early '60s, South Philadelphia has been my home.
17 Over the years, I have witnessed many dramatic
18 changes, especially the special gentrification and
19 red-lining of our community, along with
20 astronomical increases in the real estate
21 property. Because of these changes, it has made
22 it virtually impossible for my family and friends
23 that were forced to move years ago to be able to
24 return back to the neighborhood.

25 We, the residents of Catherine Street

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2 Close, have had an association with this community
3 for a long period of time and meet on a regular
4 basis in order to come up with new ideas on
5 helping to improve our neighborhood. For example,
6 once a month, we have a meeting where they come
7 out and have cleanups, and we provide refreshments
8 and stuff, and we have the children come out and
9 help too.

10 One of our organizers has been Leona
11 Smith, a very hard and diligent worker. And I
12 want to take this opportunity to thank Leona for
13 being there for us.

14 Approximately five years ago, under the
15 Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Home
16 Ownership Act, we were promised a 50-year subsidy.
17 It has now been reduced down to 2 years of
18 subsidy, causing us to live in a constant state of
19 the fear. Without subsidized housing, we will
20 just become another status quo, homeless.

21 In closing, I would like to say that we
22 should have a choice in choosing where we would
23 like to live, with dignity, pride and respect. In
24 fact, we actually have no intentions of going
25 anywhere, and we know that we can count on your

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2 help.

3 But one another thing I'd like to say
4 is unless you've lived in these types of
5 situations, you really don't really understand
6 what it is to go through it, to lay night after
7 night, not able to sleep, wondering whether you're
8 going to be homeless, wondering whether your
9 parents are going to be on the street.

10 The seniors that you've watched, who
11 looked after you as a child, who can no longer
12 defend themselves, are they going to become
13 homeless? You know, it's a very, very sad
14 situation in this City.

15 And when I moved here over 30-some
16 years ago, I thought that the City of Brotherly
17 was going to be my home. Coming from Ohio via
18 L.A., I said, Oh, I've come to a brand-new spot,
19 but this has been like a nightmare now.

20 And I know that there's a ray of hope
21 somewhere, and I'm depending on Council, along
22 with all the others, to step in and help us,
23 'cause we are willing to work with you.

24 And I am one with sympathy. When I'm
25 able to get out, I am there. My number is on my

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2 testimony. You can call me at any time, I don't
3 mind.

4 And I want to thank you for this
5 opportunity. Do you have any questions?

6 (No questions.)

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay, thank you very
8 much.

9 Ma'am, identify yourself for the
10 record.

11 MS. GORSKY: My name is Judith Gorsky,
12 and I live in the Oxford Circle of the City. I've
13 lived there for 20 years.

14 I was asked to testify by Council's
15 Kenney's office because of my bad experience with
16 having a Section 8 next door to me.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay.

18 MS. GORSKY: It's just been a
19 nightmare. We have to sleep with our fan on and
20 our air conditioner because of all the noise. We
21 have people partying sometimes for days. We've
22 had fights, we've had all kinds of -- police have
23 been there at all kinds of hours day and night.

24 And I'm sure there are many good people
25 in the Section 8 in the PHA programs, but that has

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2 not been my experience.

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Well, have you
4 complained to --

5 MS. GORSKY: The first tenant, we had
6 to go to our congressman, Borsky, to get them
7 out. If say anything to these people, we are
8 threatened with physical and verbal abuse.

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Have the police
10 come.

11 MS. GORSKY: Many times. The first
12 tenant's boyfriend threatened me and two of my
13 neighbors with a 12-gauge shotgun.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Have you gone to
15 PHA?

16 MS. GORSKY: Pardon me?

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Have you
18 communicated with PHA?

19 MS. GORSKY: The second tenant, we did
20 go through Section 8 and got her evicted.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: So she was evicted.
22 So Section 8 --

23 MS. GORSKY: After two years.

24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: So PHA -- okay.

25 MS. GORSKY: After two years of being

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2 up night after night, not being able to go to
3 sleep.

4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And this is the same
5 house?

6 MS. GORSKY: Yes. And the landlord's
7 comments to us were, "Well, if you don't like it,
8 lady, you can move."

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay. Could you
10 give that address to my assistant, okay? And we
11 will look into that.

12 MS. GORSKY: Yes.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay?

14 MS. GORSKY: Yes, thank you.

15 MS. CHAVIS: I would like to say
16 something before we leave?

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Yes.

18 MS. CHAVIS: She said Section 8 -- I
19 live in what they call "a set-aside section" in
20 the middle of Queen Village. Catherine Street is
21 between Queen and Fitzwater, okay. It's a
22 beautiful block. You can come in and see our
23 apartments look like they're town houses, okay?

24 I could make the complaint about the
25 bar on the corner from me making all the noise and

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2 stuff but I don't. Okay, I don't. You have to
3 learn how to work with your neighbors, you know.

4 Like I tell to anyone, I have one of
5 the most gorgeous tans around, and I love it,
6 okay? You know, but it doesn't make me any
7 different from anyone else. I worked for Western
8 Union for many years until I get sick two years
9 ago and they said they had no cure for me and I
10 could no longer work, but I deal with that, too.

11 You know, I've dealt with racism too.
12 I've dealt with a whole lot of things since I've
13 been in this city. You know, but you have to
14 learn how to --

15 MS. GORSKY: Can I say one thing?

16 MS. CHAVIS: Yes, I've had problems
17 with some of the my neighbors too who are not of
18 my color, okay? But, you know, you just have to
19 work with it.

20 MS. GORSKY: This is not a racial
21 thing.

22 MS. CHAVIS: But part of this has been
23 racial, though, part of this has been racial.

24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Please, please,
25 please, please.

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2 MS. GORSKY: All my neighbors have been
3 white.

4 MS. CHAVIS: You learn how to work with
5 each other.

6 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Please, please talk
7 to me.

8 MS. CHAVIS: You learn how to work with
9 each other. If the City, the state, the
10 government -- 'cause, see, Catherine Street Close
11 is not handled by PHA; it's handled by HUD, okay,
12 the top gun.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay, we understand.

14 MS. CHAVIS: So if you learn how to
15 work and everybody come in together where we can
16 really fight these battles instead of fighting
17 against each other and realize that nobody really
18 wants to be out there in the street homeless, you
19 know.

20 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Ms. Chavis, I think
21 that's all we're trying to do. What's the
22 question?

23 MS. CHAVIS: Well, I just wanted to
24 clarify --

25 MS. GORSKY: I'd just like to make one

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2 fairness, I have had help from Section 8 in
3 getting a tenant evicted; not just me, but my
4 neighbors.

5 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay. Yeah, I
6 promise that we will get back to you on that.
7 Okay?

8 MS. GORSKY: Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Very good.

10 MS. CHAVIS: And I can count on your
11 help to help us save Catherine Street Close so
12 that I will not have to move in with you, okay?

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You better believe
14 it.

15 MS. CHAVIS: Thank you. I appreciate
16 it, and have a good evening.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You're welcome.

18 Leona and I go back to the very
19 beginnings.

20 Dennis McCarthy and Lindsey Johnston.

21 (The latter approach the speaker's
22 table.)

23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Please identify
24 yourselves for the record.

25 MR. JOHNSTON: Good afternoon. I am

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2 Lindsey Johnston, broker and owner of Common
3 Ground Realtors and 1988 president-elect of The
4 Greater Philadelphia Association of Realtors.

5 I'm here today to testify on behalf of
6 the association, which represents more than 1500
7 real estate professionals and related service
8 providers throughout the greater Philadelphia
9 area.

10 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I am very glad to
11 see you here.

12 MR. JOHNSTON: Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: So is David Cohen
14 and everybody else, we're very glad to see you.

15 MR. JOHNSTON: We make an effort to
16 show up when and where counts.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: That's good.

18 MR. JOHNSTON: We acknowledge the
19 issues that are raised about the Section 8 program
20 as well as the complexity of the factors
21 contributing to those issues. The necessary
22 answers to this puzzle are not easy ones; however,
23 they are possible if all invested parties work
24 together.

25 Therefore, we propose that a panel

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2 committee consisting of our association, the
3 Philadelphia Housing Authority, other appropriate
4 City agencies and community groups, be established
5 to begin addressing these concerns. By developing
6 this City-wide partnership, we can integrate
7 government, industry and community perspectives
8 and find a viable solution.

9 Your consideration is appreciated.

10 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Sir, are you --

11 MR. MCCARTHY: Yes. Good afternoon.

12 My name is Dennis McCarthy. I'd like to thank you
13 for giving me a few moments to address this issue.

14 I am not here representing any group or
15 any professional organization. I'm here as an
16 individual property owner and a real estate broker
17 who's been involved in the management of real
18 estate in the northwest section of the City.

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Landlords have
20 really come under heavy, heavy bombardment today.
21 So it's -- we're very glad to see you.

22 MR. MCCARTHY: That's why I thought you
23 should hear from our side of the issue.

24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We had HAPCO here,
25 and now you, so it's very good.

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2 MR. MCCARTHY: Good. I've been in the
3 real estate business for 35 years or more and have
4 been involved with the Section 8 housing program
5 probably since it first started in the City of
6 Philadelphia.

7 There's recently been a lot of
8 discussions and many articles about the pros and
9 cons of the Section 8 housing program, and I feel
10 that there's a lot of misconceptions about it that
11 really should be addressed.

12 Some of the issues that have been
13 raised are that landlords receive exorbitant rent
14 payments, that the properties are of an inferior
15 and rundown condition, that the Section 8 does a
16 poor job of inspecting and monitoring the units,
17 and that the tenants are destructive and
18 disruptive to the community tranquility.

19 And there are a lot of other issues
20 that are --

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I think you've
22 addressed the issues.

23 MR. MCCARTHY: Yeah, okay. The issues
24 involved that I'd like to address are basically
25 the issue as to the rental.

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2 When a person buys rental property,
3 it's bought primarily for three reasons: to get a
4 return on their investment, for an appreciation of
5 the asset, and certain tax advantages.

6 Now, to obtain the return on the
7 investment, one of the key factors is the
8 stability of the rental income. And this is one
9 of the main reasons why a landlord would get
10 involved with the Section 8 housing program.

11 The guaranteed payment of the portion
12 of the rent by Section 8, as well as the facts
13 that the Section 8 tenant typically remains longer
14 in the unit, allows the owner to better plan his
15 or her investment strategy.

16 The monthly rental payment is
17 established by three factors: the HUD guidelines
18 based on the number of bedrooms and what utilities
19 are included in the monthly rental; the condition
20 of the property; and the fair-market rent of other
21 housing units in the community that are not leased
22 through the Section 8 housing program.

23 Now, it's been my experience that
24 Section 8 is paying the same rent for a unit that
25 we receive for Section 8 that we do in the private

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2 sector. There is no bonus being paid or
3 exorbitant amounts of rents being paid; the rents
4 are fair as to what we're getting elsewhere in the
5 community.

6 The reason an owner goes with the
7 Section 8 over a private sector is several
8 reasons, but the primary one is they like the
9 stability that they know that their income is
10 coming in on a regular basis.

11 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You know, I hear
12 both of you. And to address that issue, can your
13 organization, and through you, make available to
14 this committee sort of like a listing of the rents
15 that are -- I don't want addresses too, but, you
16 know, give me by -- we have a map up there -- in
17 terms of census tracts and so on.

18 So that because the perception that
19 landlords and realtors are becoming hugely,
20 extremely rich out of this program, taxpayer
21 dollars going to individuals; first of all to poor
22 people who do not deserve because they don't work
23 for it and get something for nothing; and then to
24 unscrupulous landlords that do not provide the
25 services and do not upkeep the residences and so

2 on, and they're getting rich.

6 MR. MCCARTHY: Well, I can answer for
7 myself.

9 MR. MCCARTHY: We do that now. We give
10 that to Section 8, which is part of their
11 assessment of values. They want comparable
12 non-Section 8 rentals. We provide those to them
13 to justify any rents that we try to obtain from
14 them, and that's a big part of how they establish
15 their rental basis that they get from us and ads
16 in newspapers that they follow and other brokers
17 and other landlords to get a feel as to what the
18 going rents are for a three- or four-bedroom
19 house, whatever the case may be.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We've had stories
22 here about landlords that own 20, 30, 50 homes and
23 that they just let them go down the drain in order
24 to block-bust a neighborhood.

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2 northwest section of the City, so it's a well-
3 established, integrated community, so that's not
4 really an issue up there as much as any economics
5 of the issue may be. I can't speak for other
6 areas, but that certainly isn't the case where we
7 are.

8 MR. JOHNSTON: In my area, we have
9 tenants by choice and tenants by circumstance.
10 And I think that's an important point because, as
11 Mr. Schwartz pointed out, Rittenhouse Square has
12 the highest tenant occupancy; however, these are
13 tenants by choice.

14 These are empty-nesters or young
15 professionals that say, My stay in Philadelphia is
16 three or four years, and it does not make sense
17 for me to buy a house. Therefore, I am a tenant
18 by choice.

19 Most of the tenants, and all Section 8
20 tenants, are tenants by circumstance. The
21 circumstances do not allow for them the option of
22 home ownership. It's tragic in that what the
23 Section 8 subsidy would be for that rental
24 property is often double what the mortgage payment
25 would be.

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2 But in the University City and West
3 Philadelphia sector in which my company does most
4 of its business, the establishment of rents is
5 based on market value. There is a certain premium
6 for a proximity to campus.

7 There are those landlords, as
8 University City has lost a little bit of its
9 luster and as those graduate students that paid
10 those good rents have gone to Center City or the
11 suburbs, the only tenant that might come in and
12 pay an equal rent is a Section 8 tenant.

13 That is affecting the neighborhood in
14 that, although I believe that everyone has a right
15 to fair and affordable and good housing, there is
16 somewhere in the continuum the question of, Where
17 do we now go from the deinstitutionalizing or
18 allowing everyone access and then once access gets
19 to a certain level, is this now still a
20 neighborhood that is still desirable for those
21 very same reasons?

22 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But people are
23 leaving not because Section 8 was there. The
24 graduate students, as you said, were leaving for
25 Center City and other areas, not because Section

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2 8, you know, was moving into the neighborhood.

3 MR. JOHNSTON: That is true, but
4 Councilman --

5 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay, Section 8
6 actually saved the landlord because Section 8 was
7 there to provide a tenant for a house that
8 otherwise would have been vacant for a certain
9 amount of time.

10 MR. JOHNSTON: And this is where we get
11 into legislating human behavior because those
12 prejudices, as we've discussed here, Section 8 is
13 often used as the race card.

14 And so, when you have the four-unit
15 building, is it true that you can put a Section 8
16 tenant in with a bunch of college kids and they
17 can get along? It should be in a perfect world,
18 but is this the case?

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Well, can you put
20 anybody with a bunch of college kids and get
21 along?

22 MR. JOHNSTON: No. Good point.

23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I mean, ya know,
24 come on, the beer parties and all the other stuff.
25 You know, as somebody who went to college for a

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2 long time, I can attest to you, I don't think me
3 personally would like to move into any
4 neighborhood where, you know, my daughter is in
5 college yet at this point.

6 MR. JOHNSTON: Well, maybe I'm being
7 misinterpreted here.

8 I have been in many a Section 8
9 apartment that was far and away cleaner, where I'd
10 rather lay my head than in a hovel where some of
11 these 19-year-old college kids live.

12 So when we talk about issues that are
13 destroying certain neighborhoods, no, please don't
14 misinterpret me by saying that I believe that the
15 Section 8 situation is what is breaking down West
16 Philadelphia.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: No, I wasn't
18 interpreting that but I'm just making a point in
19 clarification for the record.

20 Yeah, I would love to see that type of
21 information coming into the committee because I do
22 not believe -- if Section 8 were not around, as
23 Liz Hersh said, we would have an incredible amount
24 of people that would be out in the streets because
25 we do not have the stock of low- and moderate-

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2 income, affordable housing in this City.

3 So, you know, and I think the
4 landlords, if Section 8 wasn't around, I think
5 we'd have a lot of landlords that would be going
6 out of business. Would that be a correct
7 assertion?

8 MR. MCCARTHY: If there wasn't -- I
9 missed that.

10 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: If Section 8 were
11 not around, we would have a lot of that landlords
12 either would be abandoning homes or be going out
13 of business?

14 MR. MCCARTHY: I don't personally
15 believe that's the case, no. I mean, of my
16 management, probably 15 percent of it is Section 8
17 subsidized housing and the rest of it. And most
18 of my landlords have a mix of tenants; some that
19 are Section 8 some that are not.

20 I don't think it's a question that
21 these houses can't be rented to anyone but Section
22 8. They're in good --

23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: No, I'm not saying
24 that because, actually, what we're trying to do is
25 give people in Section 8 houses that are very well

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2 and very liveable. But I'm not saying that --
3 that's not the interpretation I want you to take
4 for that question.

5 MR. JOHNSTON: I would say that there
6 are landlords who, when they were trying to rent
7 to low- and moderate-income sectors and were
8 having a hard time collecting rents, and these
9 same landlords, just like you and I, on the 15th
10 of the month, that mortgage payment has to be into
11 the bank.

12 If they were having a hard time getting
13 rent in time to make that payment, then yes, that
14 was a great incentive to say, If I go to the
15 Section 8 program, I know that that when I look in
16 my mailbox on the 1st of the month, that check
17 will be there.

18 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And if we didn't
19 have the ability to be able to house families in
20 these houses that are very well and good homes and
21 so on, we would have a lot of folks out on the
22 streets that would be homeless.

23 MR. JOHNSTON: That's right.

24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Because they could
25 not afford your regular rents; is that correct.

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2 MR. MCCARTHY: No question about it.

3 MR. JOHNSTON: And I'm sorry Councilman
4 Cohen isn't still here because he kept asking the
5 question as to, Why did these houses in Kensington
6 that were rehabed by CDC sit vacant?

7 There are two approaches that I want to
8 take to that. One, with the current revising of
9 welfare laws, a person used to be able to buy a
10 house regardless of whether they were on public
11 assistance or not.

12 It was an income screen, and the
13 underwriting guidelines say that a permanent
14 income stream qualifies.

15 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: That's right.

16 MR. JOHNSTON: With the revised welfare
17 standards and set time limits, underwriting is no
18 longer allowing that income to be included because
19 they say, It is not infinite; it will, indeed,
20 come to a halt. So that kicks out certain home
21 buyers.

22 Number two, there are no city agencies
23 that encourage any CDC's to use realtors to help
24 move their property, and these CDC's are not set
25 up to move property. They do not understand the

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2 vagaries of the real estate market.

3 And so we have often unlicensed
4 practitioners that do not -- are not well-versed
5 in credit issues and underwriting issues that are
6 trying to sell some of these houses.

7 And I'll give you an example. The West
8 Philadelphia Partnership CDC came to us after not
9 being able to move a house in the 800 block of
10 South Alden Street. It's a situation where those
11 people that can afford to live there might not
12 want to, and those people who would be willing
13 can't afford to. And they need the help of the
14 professionals that do this 8, 12, 16 hours a day,
15 8 days a week.

16 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Very good.

17 MR. JOHNSTON: And that's why we're
18 here.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
20 afternoon, gentlemen. Certain, Mr. Johnston, I
21 agree with all that you have said.

22 And with respect to your testimony
23 where you mentioned that panel committee, Mr.
24 Chairman, I had other former PHA tenants and other
25 interested people who stopped me even in the

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2 hallway who talk about the panel committee.

3 So I think that that -- I don't know
4 what the Chair said while I was out of the room
5 about the panel committee, but it seems to me a
6 good way to go because we have a lot of committed
7 people like yourself who would be interested.

8 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I am interested.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And I would
10 also like to say with regard to CDSs and how they
11 relate to the community, I really agree.

12 It is sad that if we're all in the
13 same, even a small geographical area, if we can't
14 all work together to make it happen -- in fact, I
15 think that instance shows that if we don't, things
16 fall apart somewhat to the degree that nothing
17 moves.

18 And if you don't move forward when it
19 comes to vacant housing, you in effect move
20 backward. And we're all in the same geographical
21 area, with the same community to serve, that we
22 have to work together to make it work for all of
23 us.

24 So certainly let me thank you. Thank
25 you.

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2 old friends on totally entirely different agendas,
3 but it's nice to see them. And certainly you, as
4 always, Charles.

5 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And I'm very
6 delighted. And the key situation is that most of
7 you -- and I just want to thank you for staying
8 because we've been having a very -- this is, I
9 think -- somebody has said that this is an issue
10 that can really divide the City up and really put
11 it into a very bad situation.

12 And I think we are trying to bring it
13 together, so I'm very happy that you have stayed
14 and that you're here to testify on this issue.

15 Please identify yourself for the
16 record.

17 MS. GRAY: Good evening. My name is
18 Corlis Gray. I'm the president of Queen Lane
19 Tenants Council which is under the umbrella of the
20 Residents Advisory Board.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay.

22 MS. CONEY: My name is Asia Coney, and
23 I'm also a member of the Residents Advisory Board,
24 president of the Tenants Improvement Council. I'm
25 also a member of the Technical Assistance

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2 Organization. And, last but not least,
3 cochairperson of the national organization known
4 as the Million Woman March.

5 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And congratulations,
6 by the way.

7 MS. CONEY: Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And you're not Tony
9 Lewis 'cause I know Tony Lewis.

10 (Laughter.)

11 MS. GRAY: He's on his way, though.

12 MR. REEVES: My name is Charles Reeves,
13 Director of Grays Ferry West, in Grays Ferry.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you very
15 much. Who wants to begin?

16 MS. CONEY: Good afternoon, once
17 again.

18 I'm present today to add my voice in
19 grave concern to many others who have come before
20 you today concerning the changes being proposed to
21 Section 8 Program mainly discussed as it relates
22 to the assignment and on limiting the number of
23 certificates to certain areas and having the
24 certificates become project-based, which, I think,
25 is a very serious program.

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2 The program, as you know, was designed
3 to have some flexibility and to be mobile and to
4 assist in upgrading one's circumstances as well as
5 provide housing opportunities otherwise not
6 available at the time.

7 The day-to-day threats of the radical
8 conservative Republican and Democratic elected
9 officials who are trying to promote a position
10 steeped in racism, as I see it, where holders of
11 Section 8 certificates will not be given the same
12 rights as everyone else to live in a neighborhood
13 of their choosing.

14 The reduction of the life span of the
15 Section 8 certificate was just the beginning of
16 the demise of this program, with the 15-year
17 certificate which then became the 10-year
18 certificate, then a five-year and now a 2-year,
19 has a 2-year life span, we clearly see that they
20 are chopping away at this program as it goes on.

21 And remember Whitman Park of the
22 1960's, which became a national disgrace to
23 Philadelphia. We're saying that the racist
24 attitudes of this nation will not be allowed to
25 rear their ugly head again.

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2 promised in 1949 that it would reach a goal of
3 decent housing and a suitable living environment
4 for every American family.

5 Well, we continue to wait for the
6 nation to make the effort. Grass roots
7 organizations that I belong to and like Leona
8 belongs to and several others of us find ourselves
9 continuously in positions of advocacy where
10 affordable and decent housing becomes less and
11 less of a reality.

12 We equate this not-in-my-backyard
13 syndrome -- and that's basically what this is, not
14 in my backyard syndrome -- to the Jim Crowe
15 legislation of years passed.

16 This hateful, racist behavior by those
17 who insist on ignoring fair housing laws of this
18 United States will not go unchallenged. Anyone
19 who should lead or would an assault on poor,
20 defenseless people who are in search of decent
21 housing should review past history and understand
22 that it was not accepted then, it will not be
23 accepted now, especially as we move towards the
24 year 2,000, into the next millennium.

25 We will not permit racist attitudes in

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2 individuals to decide where people should or
3 should not live based on standards of race, income
4 ethnic background and/or ignorance.

5 The challenges of Section 8 proposed
6 that are based on racist thinking and ethnic
7 intimidation will be addressed, and we stand and
8 are prepared to meet the challenge.

9 Thank you to the members of City
10 Council.

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. GRAY: My name is Corlis Gray
13 president of the Queen Lane Tenants Council, a
14 tenant organization seeking clarity on the Section
15 8 situation.

16 To my knowledge, the message that is
17 being sent by the Housing & Urban Development
18 agreement in Washington is that they don't want to
19 have cities dumping or putting people all on one
20 page.

21 In housing house families of a higher
22 income with families that are very poor,
23 Washington believes that this gives role models
24 for children and adults, which shows them a better
25 way to live and gives them examples to look up

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2 to. For example, it teaches residents to strive
3 to obtain higher education, to go to work to, to
4 become better citizens, and to put back into the
5 community instead of destroying it.

6 To me, Section 8 is the perfect vehicle
7 to do this. Instead of mixing working people into
8 the sites, you take lower-income people and mixing
9 them in with the working families in the
10 residential areas.

11 I believe they will also need support
12 and services to help build themselves up to be
13 equal to their neighbors.

14 Finally, I would like to refer you to
15 the Gottrick (ph.) Experiment done in Chicago in
16 the 1970's, where the children of lower-income
17 people did better in school, obtaining employment,
18 and behavior than when they lived clustered in
19 segregated inner-city neighborhoods.

20 We should have learned by now that
21 segregating people together in poverty does not
22 help anyone. It doesn't help those families, and
23 it doesn't help the City. Thank you.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: That's the lesson

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2 back to the march in Grays Ferry. As you know, I
3 was one of the major pushers of that march in
4 Grays Ferry, and I thank God I was able to do that
5 'cause I thought it was necessary, absolutely
6 necessary, and I hope it don't become necessary
7 again in any other parts of the City.

8 But, unfortunately, from what I'm
9 hearing that's coming out of the Northeast, on the
10 TV, they're showing a letter that's being passed
11 out to people about how they're going to be burned
12 out if they don't move out of Section 8 houses.

13 I say to these people who are thinking
14 like this, Beware, 'cause you live in a house
15 too. And, so help me God, if any part of this
16 City where we find the black people have been
17 attacked there, we're going to take black men in
18 that area.

19 We're not going to no longer all sit
20 back and call the police department because we're
21 finding out that the police department, with their
22 racist attitudes, is part of the major problem of
23 the problems we're having in this City and
24 especially Grays Ferry where we got people who are
25 filing complaints about being harassed, their

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2 response they need to get.

3 Section 8 goes back years ago. I was
4 in the demonstration in Whitman Park. I was
5 Washington, D.C. with Frank Rizzo when they
6 brought him there twice because he didn't utilize
7 the Section 8 program correctly in the City of
8 Philadelphia. I don't know if any of you all
9 remember that.

10 And here we go, here we are now. And
11 now my concern is where you gonna cluster these
12 people at? What are you talking about, in the
13 suburbs? I know nobody's stated where they going
14 at.

15 The lady said a few minutes ago about
16 the government in Washington, D.C. I almost only
17 six years in Washington, D.C. about this very same
18 thing. In 1982, they were talking about
19 relocating Hispanics and blacks in suburban areas,
20 they were talking about cutting this and cutting
21 that and the Section 8 program.

22 Back in May of last year, I
23 (unintelligible) in Grays Ferry in the little
24 (unintelligible) in a church somewhere. There was
25 so much racism in the room, you could cut through

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2 with a butter knife.

3 And these people are talking about
4 vigilantes marching on people's houses and getting
5 rid of 'em, and the guy next door got a Cadillac
6 and I don't have none, I've been working 30 years,
7 and all this stupid stuff like I heard some of the
8 stuff here tonight.

9 It has nothing to do with the person's
10 (unintelligible) or what right they have to be
11 there. If they're doing something illegal, have
12 the police deal with it, but you don't have a
13 right to march to on their house and threaten the
14 people, okay?

15 The people in Grays Ferry who are now
16 supporting these criminals who attacked this lady
17 over there and that (unintelligible) family, and
18 they're upset about it and they think they're
19 going to use this Section 8 thing as an excuse to
20 keep attacking people, I warn them, be very
21 careful about what they're doing 'cause we are fed
22 up with their foolishness, we're fed up with the
23 police department. And, I'm telling you, this
24 City's getting ready to rock and roll if they
25 don't watch themselves.

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2 And not only them in South Philly, the
3 ones out in the Northeast and in any other part of
4 the City where they think they can just attack
5 black families and get away with it.

6 Now, I had a lady that just called me
7 this morning from the Northeast. They were
8 running up to her house and they told her they'd
9 burn them out, and all this kind of foolishness
10 going on. And still the police department winds
11 up locking her son up for defending his mother.

12 I want to say this, and I'm going to
13 say this with all my heart, I've been in this
14 City, have doing community work for 37 years. I'm
15 not a racist. I don't care what color people they
16 were.

17 But if they're violating the law --
18 we're supposed to be law-abiding citizens. If
19 these people are violating the law, why aren't
20 they being arrested? Why is all this dumb stuff
21 going on?

22 And this is what's making people mad
23 because the police department will not arrest
24 these people. Because most of the police out in
25 my area live out there; we got three captains who

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2 live right around me.

3 I went to court the other day with a
4 lady by the name of Sheila LeBue (ph.), who lives
5 at 1524 Washington Street. They was doing
6 everything to this woman.

7 Here's a woman that's in her late 30s,
8 she's never been arrested in her life. And in the
9 last month and a half, she's been arrested three
10 times on her block when she called the cops to
11 complain about what they was doing to her.

12 And when the cops come, the white folks
13 come out in the street and scream and holler, and
14 the police, the same racist police, wind up
15 charging her. Now, she's got three different
16 cases to go to court with. She's moving.

17 And I see now we're starting to get our
18 churches burned down right here in the City of
19 Philadelphia. Where do these people think they
20 are? Somebody better listen up, somebody better
21 talk up to them because, I'm telling you --

22 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Mr. Reeves, I think
23 today, in essence, I'm a believer that you got to
24 discuss problems, and you got to be able to put
25 everything on the table.

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2 They asked us to postpone this hearing,
3 I mean, because they were afraid of something
4 happening, and that it was too volatile. I've
5 never been afraid to face the tough, hot, whatever
6 issues there are.

7 And I said no because we cannot let
8 something just fester, fester and fester outside.
9 And we have to begin taking positions of
10 leadership. And we have to begin saying that
11 certain things are wrong and that certain
12 attitudes are wrong. And that if there is, what
13 we cannot do is to allow a program to become a
14 code word for something else.

15 And we have to begin, those of us who
16 are in political leadership and who have been put
17 into leadership, we have to begin saying, This is
18 not going to happen while we sit here. We will
19 not allow it.

20 I will not want for you to do what you
21 say, you know, that, because we should not allow
22 anybody, the citizens of this City, no matter who
23 they are and where they come from or how poor or
24 how rich, we're supposed to be a City and a nation
25 of laws, and those laws have to be respected, and

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2 everybody has to be protected at the same level.

3 And I would hate us to ever be put into
4 a position in which we have to start taking the
5 law into our own hands to try and defend our own
6 self, because then we have ceased being a
7 society. And we cannot afford that.

8 And I know that we are at this point --
9 I got two -- I got three kids. I got two at home;
10 one is seven and one is three. And I want them to
11 be able to live and be able to go out.

12 And I teach them that they are
13 individuals that are free, and they are able to do
14 that and go wherever it is in this country as long
15 as they obey the laws.

16 So we have a situation here, and I
17 think we needed this hearing in order to start
18 putting this issue on the right track, and I think
19 we've accomplished that today. I think we
20 accomplished that today.

21 We need to begin taking the code word
22 out of Section 8. We need to begin taking out the
23 code word when they say, These people get
24 something for nothing and I'm a taxpayer and I am
25 subsidizing someone.

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2 So what we are trying to do is make it
3 clear to the administration that the ghettoizing,
4 if it was wrong to put into ghettos, 20-story
5 ghettos in Richard Rosen, and everybody found out
6 that that was a bad experiment.

7 Well, it is wrong to put them in small
8 little clusters the same way, and I think the
9 message that is being sent to the Mayor and to the
10 PHA people and to the OHCD is, in essence, that we
11 don't like clustering, we do not like people being
12 set apart from one another, to being labeled.

13 We are not that type of society. That
14 type of society is not what American society is to
15 be about. We do not label people and put a star
16 on an individual and say, There goes a poor
17 person.

18 That is not the type of City that we
19 want. That is the type of City that creates
20 problems and creates division and creates
21 hostility and hatred, and I don't think we want to
22 go down that road.

23 MR. REEVES: One more point I wanted to
24 add to that. In the process of having HUD enforce
25 some of the regulations that they have for the

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2 Section 8 program, which I think is a good program
3 if they'll do that, the police department in this
4 City needs to be checked.

5 Because, see, the police department is
6 causing a lot of problems in the City because
7 they're not doing their job properly, you know,
8 and this is where this racism is coming out of,
9 this Philadelphia Police Department.

10 And I'm talking seriously about Grays
11 Ferry, okay? And I suspect that it's going on all
12 over the City, because the same things are
13 happening where people are being attacked and
14 nothing's being done about it. So we need to make
15 sure that these laws are going to be enforced for
16 everybody.

17 Thank you very much.

18 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Miss Coney.

19 MS. CONEY: Yes. I would just like to
20 clarify a point.

21 Charles talked about a meeting earlier
22 at a church. This meeting was called by the Grays
23 Ferry Community Council in which John White, Jr.,
24 who, at that time, was elected director of the
25 Philadelphia Housing Authority attended.

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2 The specific purpose of that meeting
3 was them demanding that no more Section 8
4 certificates will be placed in the Grays Ferry
5 community, and it was a very volatile meeting.

6 Also, the other individuals that
7 Charles talked about, the women and the families
8 that have been addressed in homes that we've gone
9 to, they are also recipients or holders of Section
10 8 certificates.

11 So to be real clear, this situations is
12 one in which individuals are moving into
13 communities with Section 8 certificates, which is
14 their right, but they are being met with racism.

15 And I honestly see this whole plan of
16 clustering individuals as a plan of getting
17 individuals out of the community and it is
18 disguised and steeped deep in racism.

19 And, for the record, I want to be clear
20 that everybody understands that.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Miss Coney, I think
22 that's understood.

23 MS. GRAY: And, clearly stated, it's
24 clustering black people. And everybody else
25 waltzes in and takes the regular Section 8

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2 certificates and go into the neighborhoods and
3 cluster our people. And that's what I resent.

4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Well, I don't think
5 it functioned, I don't think it worked. And, as
6 David Cohen said here before he left, I don't
7 think the majority of this Council, the
8 overwhelming majority of this Council, would go
9 along with a plan like that, and we would make it
10 very clear that we need to discuss whatever plan
11 PHA or OHCD is trying to put across, they're going
12 to have to come here before they implement it.

13 MS. CONEY: And we certainly support
14 that.

15 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

16 MS. CONEY: Thank you.

17 MR. REEVES: Thank you very much.

18 MS. GRAY: Mr. Lewis is on his way.

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay, please
20 identify yourself for the record.

21 MR. BAZZOLI: My name is Leo Bazzoli,
22 mostly known as "Buzz."

23 I'm on the Board of Directors of the
24 Kensington Independent Civic Association. I've
25 been a community activist for around 40 years. I

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2 believe I'll go first in testimony.

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I want to thank you,
4 by the way. You know, you understand that we had
5 a very long hearing, and I want to thank you for
6 staying and bearing with us throughout the day.

7 So I apologize for the length but thank
8 you very much for staying.

9 MR. BAZZOLI: Being as I'm testifying
10 so late, I've cut everything to the bare bones.
11 Tonight I'll attempt to put forth a few
12 observations that I've gotten for more years than
13 I care to remember as being a community activist.
14 And I hope to shed light on the situation for both
15 sides.

16 Section 8, when it was originally set
17 up, it set the rents for an entire zip code. It
18 purposely set them high to entice landlords to
19 accept Section 8 vouchers because everybody --
20 well, no one knew what it was, and was a little
21 leery about it.

22 And this caused rents in the area to
23 rise accordingly. And a landlord that doesn't
24 have Section 8 says, Hey, those guys are getting
25 X-amount of dollars, so I'm going to raise my rent

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2 and they did.

3 But the scattered site Section 8 hasn't
4 worked too well till this time, and two of the
5 reasons follow.

6 I'm sure you've heard all kinds of
7 horror stories today about landlords not taking
8 care of properties and stuff like that. That's
9 another issue that should be addressed.

10 Many of the people chosen for this
11 program lacked the social skill to interact in a
12 positive way in new surroundings.

13 Secondly, many of them lacked basic
14 housekeeping skills. As strange as it seems, we
15 had a situation on our street where a family moved
16 into an apartment, their washer sat on the porch
17 for a week or two. We figured, They're going to
18 put it in eventually.

19 One day the washer's out there happily
20 pumping wash water over the banister and onto the
21 pavement. So we immediately told the people.
22 They said, Well, that's where we're going to put
23 our washer, and you're going to take it and like
24 it. And so we had to contact the landlord and L&I
25 to get the situation settled. Well, these people

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2 just didn't know any better.

3 Perhaps -- now, this is the nasty word,
4 and I don't think to use it, but perhaps some sort
5 of a clustered or living in an area to enhance
6 these skills before these people move into the
7 community, it might help.

8 In other words, I'm sure the
9 councilwomen and the councilmen, they've watched
10 their parents clean and this and that, and they
11 know how to do it.

12 Now, I know people that can't scrub a
13 floor. They have no idea what to do. They know
14 to slosh some water and push a mop around but
15 that's it, let alone cleaning a house or taking
16 care of the outside.

17 In many cases, people like that are the
18 very reason for flight by established residents of
19 a neighborhood, regardless of race, color, or
20 whatever. The flight begins and then it becomes a
21 target for real estate speculators who move in,
22 using scare tactics to induce more flight.

23 Believe me, we've lived through this.
24 Did you see what moved in down the street? Better
25 sell your house and get a better price for it,

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2 etc., etc.

3 A community rapidly disintegrates from
4 that point, from a taxpaying community to a
5 tax-dependent community and with the result of
6 cutting back in public services.

7 I'm sure the streets in Chestnut Hill
8 are cleaned a lot more often than the streets are
9 in Kensington. The only time they get cleaned is
10 when we do it ourselves.

11 As the properties deteriorate, other
12 speculators move in, they buy these properties for
13 a pittance, and they resell them on either a shady
14 lease-purchase deal where the poor person's bought
15 the house and will never have a chance as a
16 snowball in Hades to own that house. It's just a
17 way to renting a house, without taking
18 responsibilities.

19 They either do that or put it under
20 Section 8 for as long as they can or put it on an
21 open rental market. And they file an untraceable
22 lease or an untraceable deed by using the property
23 they purchased as their mailing address. This
24 way, they become invisible, the visible landlords.

25 I can point out properties in

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2 Kensington that -- five different properties that
3 the same man owns. He's got five different
4 addresses, and we can't locate him.

5 As a rule, these people pay no taxes or
6 water or sewer bills. They do minimal repairs,
7 and when they milk the property for all it's
8 worth, they walk away from it and they leave the
9 community with another problem to deal with.

10 And I'm referring you to the
11 accompaniment in my testimony there. That's 244
12 abandoned houses in a 20-block area of Kensington.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And all of these 244
14 houses were Section 8 houses? And you have proof
15 of that?

16 MR. BAZZOLI: No, no. Let me go on.
17 All of these houses were once owner-occupied, and
18 they went through that scenario in one way or
19 another, whether they went through Section 8 or
20 whether they went through private rentals.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But do you have
22 proof that these houses were abandoned because
23 Section 8 moved into the neighborhood?

24 MR. BAZZOLI: No. Well, I've known
25 people -- not an abandoned house, Councilman,

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2 Don't get me wrong there. I'm not saying this.

3 We have Section 8 on our street, and
4 they're --

5 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But you're making a
6 statement about 244 houses that are abandoned, and
7 the interpretation is that these houses were the
8 result, the end-result of the same program.

9 MR. BAZZOLI: They were owned the by
10 speculators at one time or another. They went
11 through the above scenario, whether they were
12 rented through Section 8 or whether they were
13 rented on the open market is irrelevant.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But you cannot
15 prevent speculators. We're talking here about
16 Section 8 housing, okay? And we need to be able
17 to have that very clear.

18 You cannot say that 244 houses, and you
19 make a list here, and that also these houses give
20 the impression -- and I don't want to leave it for
21 the record -- that these houses were abandoned
22 because of Section 8 problems.

23 MR. BAZZOLI: I'm not saying they were
24 abandoned because of Section 8; they were
25 abandoned because of condition that they were let

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2 get into by the landlords who filed an untraceable
3 deed. You can't find these people, they're gone,
4 but we're stuck with the houses.

5 Whether those houses were Section 8 or
6 whether they were straight rentals or whether they
7 were owned, it doesn't matter. They were gone.

8 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: They were once
9 owner-occupied, you have said that. Perhaps the
10 time has come to limit the number of Section 8
11 rentals.

12 MR. BAZZOLI: Okay.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: That's where you're
14 at.

15 MR. BAZZOLI: Now, these properties
16 were once owner-owner homes which had been through
17 the scenario above.

18 I don't care whether it's -- look, I
19 have nothing against Section 8, nothing at all.
20 We're going to have the poor people that are going
21 to be living with us forever; they must be helped.

22 But I do have a problem with the way
23 Section 8 operates. It's a cash cow for
24 landlords. Maybe the time has come to limit the
25 number of Section 8 rentals in a block or in a

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2 community because Section 8 rentals, as they work
3 now, are usually the predecessor to the
4 community's decline.

5 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I just want to put
6 for the record that nothing you have said in this
7 testimony goes to substantiate that.

8 MR. BAZZOLI: Okay, as it now stands?

9 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Yes.

10 MR. BAZZOLI: But what substantiates
11 that is the information I gave you. Being it's so
12 late, I wouldn't go through all that.

13 As it stands now, it's too generous,
14 and it just became a racket. People move in, they
15 don't take care of the properties, the landlord
16 doesn't take care of the property, he just wants
17 his money.

18 The Section 8 Program has to change
19 from both sides. Landlords have to be more
20 closely supervised, and even landlords that don't
21 do Section 8.

22 We have buildings in our neighborhood
23 that rented Section 8 until they became ineligible
24 for Section 8 because they were so bad. And the
25 landlords proceeded to rent them to other people

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2 until they abandoned the building.

3 And I'm referring you right now to the
4 New York Times article. You take that and you
5 read it at your leisure because it's long, but
6 it's interesting.

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: We will do that, and
8 we will include everything in the record.

9 MR. BAZZOLI: And I'm asking you -- to
10 answer the Councilman's question, show me a
11 neighborhood that's been improved or stabilized by
12 excessive Section 8 housing, and I'll humbly
13 apologize for everything in here.

14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Councilwoman
15 Blackwell.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. I
17 represent West and Southwest Philadelphia. We
18 have opened hundreds of brand-new housing
19 developments. Developers came in, some co-
20 ventured with the community, some were totally
21 private, and they have the Section 8 subsidies,
22 brand-new, beautiful housing throughout West and
23 Southwest Philadelphia.

24 So I differ with your statement when
25 you say, Has our community been enhanced or

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2 stabilized? The answer is yes. We have hundreds
3 of houses in West Philadelphia to substantiate
4 that fact.

5 MR. BAZZOLI: Well, it must be
6 brand-new housing. I mean, to stabilize an
7 established neighborhood, it hasn't been done.
8 Kensington is your prime example, Councilwoman.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well, I can't
10 comment on Kensington; I don't know it, but I do
11 know that in West Philadelphia, it works for us.

12 MR. BAZZOLI: It seems that once a
13 neighborhood gets so bad, it seems that the
14 process in the City is, you run a neighborhood
15 into the ground until it gets so bad that it
16 becomes a wasteland, and then you build it up.

17 We want to preserve our neighborhood as
18 it is but integrated as it is also, but we don't
19 people moving in like the people I mentioned,
20 without any education that put the washer on their
21 front porch, and that's how they do the washing.
22 This is ridiculous.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We hear your
24 comments and thank you for them, but that does not
25 mean that that's the Section 8 program.

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2 MR. BAZZOLI: I didn't say they were
3 Section 8 people.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: People who
5 don't know how to live can get in that condition
6 for many reasons, but that does not necessarily
7 mean they are Section 8 people.

8 MR. BAZZOLI: I didn't say they were
9 Section 8 people.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well, this
11 hearing is about Section 8. This hearing is about
12 Section 8, so --

13 MR. BAZZOLI: Also, Section 8 affects
14 everybody, Section 8 and non-Section 8. You see
15 the predecessor to a house going to hell in a hand
16 basket, so to speak, when some speculator buys it,
17 he rents it Section 8, he scares people around on
18 both sides, they move away, then he buys their
19 houses --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's just
21 absolutely not true.

22 MR. BAZZOLI: Well, I have the proof in
23 our files at home. If I had realized you had
24 wanted them it, I would have brought the boxes
25 with me.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We thank you
3 for your testimony, sir, but we can respectfully
4 disagree.

5 MR. DEMARCO: Councilmen Ortiz,
6 Blackwell and Kenney, my name is Don DeMarco, and
7 I'm here on behalf of Open Fund for the Future of
8 Philadelphia, which is a program of funds for an
9 open society.

10 You may know us in part for our
11 intentional integrationist newsletter that you may
12 have received from time to time.

13 The Philadelphia City Administration's
14 call for moving Section 8 tenants, mostly
15 non-white out of scattered-site housing of their
16 own locational choice and into large-scale
17 developments designated by the City will be
18 opposed by Open Fund for the Future of
19 Philadelphia.

20 Mayor Rendell's administration, and
21 specifically, John Kromer, Philadelphia's Director
22 of the Office of Housing and Community
23 Development, were put on notice November 14, 1997,
24 to publicly and without reservation permanently
25 abandon all clustering plans or risk enforcement

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2 action.

3 "Open," cofounded in 1975 by civil
4 rights legend, James Farmer, and recently-deceased
5 pioneer pro-integrative developer, Morris Milgram,
6 is based in the City.

7 Its longtime methods of operation have
8 included pro-integrative service and mortgage
9 incentives. Its history has not been one of
10 confrontation or enforcement actions.

11 Open's local project, Fund for the
12 Future of Philadelphia, has engaged the support of
13 the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and the Public
14 Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, which had
15 issued a legal opinion detailing applicable
16 fair-housing law, and I have a copy of that
17 opinion to distribute to you.

18 The opinion concludes, for the
19 foregoing reasons, we conclude that Philadelphia's
20 proposal to cluster Section 8 certificate holders
21 in designated housing projects would be illegal
22 under the Fair Housing Act and other civil rights
23 statutes.

24 One, if the designated multi-unit
25 buildings selected are large complexes inhabited

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2 cheaply by Section 8 residents and other poor
3 families; or

4 Two, if the buildings are chiefly
5 located in minority neighborhoods of
6 Philadelphia. And what will be your bet that it
7 would be other than that?

8 Mayor Rendell and Council President
9 Street and other members of the Public Housing
10 Authority operate Section 8, including its
11 scattered-site variety.

12 PHA has displaced well-qualified
13 Section 8 applicants in order to give priority to
14 the homeless, many of whom do have some problems.
15 And some of those problems, in fact, make them
16 questionable neighbors.

17 Displacing qualified people is a
18 perversion of the program's intent, which was to
19 give locational choice to persons qualifying for
20 public housing assistance, who are prepared to be
21 proper neighbors.

22 Neighbors of Section 8 tenants and
23 neighbors of African Americans misidentified as
24 Section 8 tenants simply because they've rented
25 outside the ghetto are now up in arms. The City's

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2 neighborhoods are re-earning their reputations for
3 racism; and the City government, for ineptitude.

4 Parachuting ill-prepared people into
5 neighborhoods is bad policy, but to make another
6 egregious error by clustering -- that is,
7 segregating Section 8 tenements controlled by
8 favored developers -- is not the answer. Using
9 Section 8 for proper purpose is the answer.

10 Pressure from neighborhood activists
11 crying, "NIMBY" (not in my backyard) does not
12 justify segregated practices. Fix scattered-site
13 Section 8; don't use it to fuel Philly apartheid.

14 Here are copies of my statements,
15 copies of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund legal
16 opinion, as well as copies of "The Intentional
17 Integrationist," which includes some reference to
18 this segregative planning by the City agency.

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you very much
20 for your testimony. Just two questions.

21 It's my understanding that your
22 position is that you are staunchly opposed to the
23 clustering aspect of what's been -- I guess it's
24 not even formally announced yet, but it's being
25 reported in the paper as being the

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2 Administration's preference.

3 But you are also opposed to, or at
4 least find fault with the non-prepared formerly
5 homeless person getting preference over those who
6 have qualified and are waiting on the waiting list
7 today. Is that correct?

8 MR. DEMARCO: That's not only correct,
9 but I would suggest to you that putting
10 ill-prepared people in scattered-site Section 8
11 units is perhaps a device in order to cluster
12 Section 8, to whip up antagonism in the City's
13 neighborhoods so that the Section 8 certificates
14 can be put into the hands of the larger landlords
15 who, indeed, are the ones, in a number of
16 instances, getting rents that are above the market
17 rate. It's not the scattered-site people who are
18 reaping those benefits in the main.

19 So that what's proposed here actually
20 aggravates what the City has created for itself.
21 There are better jobs that can be done, and I have
22 talked to people who have an investment in the
23 homeless programs and the use of the Section 8
24 program. They have acknowledged to me that there
25 are more than a few people who are parachuted out

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2 into Section 8 housing without the necessary
3 preparation.

4 So I'm not denying that, and I don't
5 think you have to deny that in order to take the
6 position that clustering is segregative, and
7 segregative action by government is unlawful. And
8 CDBG funds and other dollars that come to the City
9 may have a cloud put over them if the City goes
10 ahead with this program.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm just gathering
12 this from your testimony, but do you believe that
13 that process of parachuting quote/unquote people
14 into communities isolated is done intentionally?

15 MR. DEMARCO: I think that it's done
16 neglectfully. I think it's done knowingly. I
17 think it's done recognizing that there will be
18 unhappy consequences. I think it's done without
19 taking the effort that's necessary in order to
20 rectify the problem.

21 And now, instead of rectifying the
22 problem, we're going to compound it by segregating
23 people in large complexes. So we have one mistake
24 which is going to be aggravated by another
25 mistake. And this second make will not be

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2 tolerated by Future or Open.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I ask this
4 following question because I was curious as to
5 what you're experience has been, good and bad,
6 with respect to the Section 8 program one way or
7 the other. What section of the City do you live
8 in?

9 MR. DEMARCO: I happen to live in the
10 northwest. And to the extent that I have
11 experience --

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: If you have any, if
13 you have any.

14 MR. DEMARCO: Yeah. It's not that
15 much in the neighborhood where I live. For the
16 most part, I hear --

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: That you know of,
18 in all fairness. Not to interrupt you but --

19 MR. DEMARCO: That's right.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: The vast majority
21 of tenants are decent people and you don't even
22 know they're there.

23 MR. DEMARCO: That's right.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And you wouldn't
25 even know the difference between them and --

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2 MR. DEMARCO: Exactly. And there are
3 people of all hues, even though overall most of
4 the Section 8 tenants are people of color.

5 And in most instances, I think there's
6 not necessarily a problem. In some instances,
7 there are. Those problems are being used in order
8 to contort a whole program into a segregationist
9 scheme.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay, thank you.

11 Council Members, do you have any
12 questions for these witnesses?

13 (No questions from the Council
14 Members.)

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you for your
16 testimony.

17 MR. DEMARCO: Here are my copies.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Are there
19 representatives of the Housing Association?

20 I'm sorry, sir, we have one more
21 witness before you.

22 Mr. Lockey, please come forward.

23 (Mr. Lockey comes forward.)

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Good afternoon.

25 Thank you for waiting. Please identify yourself

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2 for the record.

3 MR. LOCKEY: Thank you very much. My
4 name is Wade H. Lockey. I live at 4808 Disston
5 Street, in Philadelphia.

6 What happened in me is, I moved into
7 this apartment complex of, oh, six apartments.
8 And when I moved in, I had a different landlord,
9 and he made me show him my latest bank statement,
10 and I had to give him the name -- or the phone
11 number where I lived -- I mean, where I worked,
12 for a confirmation of my income.

13 In the meantime, he eventually sold the
14 apartment building to a very big real estate
15 company in Philadelphia. And I didn't think
16 anything of it. I met my new landlord and, you
17 know, I didn't think anything of it.

18 But over a period of time, what had
19 happened was, I noticed there was a difference in
20 tenants. They were disruptive, they were young
21 people who had what I call "baggage." In other
22 words, they had problems when they came.

23 And I said, Geez, it looks like they
24 just liberated themselves from their parents, and
25 this is their first apartment. And there was all

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2 kinds of stuff like a guy coming in 3 in the
3 morning to see his girlfriend, they had their
4 kids, and so on. And there was a lot of violence
5 and threats and noise.

6 Well, I was hoping to not have to get
7 involved in that. One time I did refer a young
8 lady to a place to get her food for her children,
9 and so on.

10 And so what happened is, eventually
11 there was a guy that became -- and I have to
12 emphasize this, everybody in this case was white.
13 Let me tell you. It has nothing to do with
14 religion -- or race.

15 And so this guy moved in next door to
16 me, and I had two other tenants before that and I
17 never had a problem. I was engaged in my work,
18 which is computer technology, and I was hardly
19 ever home, because I was always busy.

20 Well, anyhow, this guy comes in next
21 door, and he suddenly -- I noticed that he had a
22 lot of visitors. Well, we had a lot of visitors.
23 We had a coffee house open on Torresdale Avenue.
24 I live up on Tacony, and he had about 17 different
25 guys in 17 different nights.

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2 1996, I was coming out of my apartment. Our
3 apartments are like four feet apart on the side of
4 the building, and he punched me in the face five
5 times. Well, I did go to the 15th District and I
6 made a record of it. Well, I never had a -- I
7 never bothered with the guy because I didn't care.

8 Well, anyhow, what happened was, the
9 landlord eventually moved all these other people
10 in, with all their problems. And one night -- I
11 mean, I did meet some of the young people that he
12 moved in.

13 And one night I came home, and this is
14 like -- well, you figure the hearing is going to
15 be December the 17th, so it couldn't be too far
16 away. And these two young men who -- they moved
17 in with their girlfriends. I checked with the
18 landlord, and he said, Oh, I only have girls
19 registered.

20 They moved in with their girlfriends,
21 and they had given me like, you know, like sad
22 stories like, Geez, I'm in between my job and all
23 that, you know. So, I was like, Oh, okay here's a
24 twenty-dollar bill for rent, you know, and never
25 got my money back never expecting to get it back.

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2 So one night, they met me at the curb
3 when I was coming home, and it was 9 o'clock at
4 night. It's a matter of record, by the way,
5 police record.

6 And they said, We want you to take us
7 somewhere. I said I'm not taking anybody
8 anywhere. I gave you guys 20 bucks apiece and I
9 told you, on the basis of that, don't bother me
10 anymore because I know people, you know, bother
11 you if you're easy, they'll bother you more.

12 Well, anyhow, as I got out of my truck
13 with my dog, which I had a German Sheppard which
14 I've always had 'em, and they started to beat me
15 to the ground and threatened my life.

16 And as I tried to make it to my
17 apartment to call 9-1-1, which Frank Rizzo says
18 it's more like Dial-A-Prayer, and he's right,
19 'cause it was, and it took me a week to get
20 detectives out.

21 And I was beaten three or four times to
22 the ground. A young man did come to my rescue and
23 so on. And they tried to grab my wallet, and they
24 lived in the apartment building. That's what got
25 me. And, eventually, after five or six days, the

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2 my point.

3 It's a bunch of people imported in
4 there under Section 8. And I happened to see a
5 lot of the mail that was in the vestibule there
6 from Section 8 government asking to inspect the
7 property and so on.

8 But all this -- what happened was, my
9 landlord would just sit there and he would call
10 Section 8 anytime he wanted a tenant, and I'm the
11 only legitimate person there that ever pays
12 regular rent and was there even before the
13 landlord.

14 So, in other words, I have been
15 assaulted three times by the tenants, including an
16 attempted robbery. That's my point.

17 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you.

18 MR. LOCKEY: Okay?

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I appreciate it.

20 MR. LOCKEY: Do you understand?

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Yes.

22 MR. LOCKEY: Are you Mr. -- you know,
23 the Puerto Rican representative.

24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I'm the Puerto
25 Rican.

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2 MR. LOCKEY: Mr. Ortiz?

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Yeah.

4 MR. LOCKEY: Okay, well, I saw you at
5 the law enforcement meeting we had up at Illona
6 Keller's restaurant.

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Dugan's, yes.

8 MR. LOCKEY: And you know what happened
9 since then? I asked, in front of the microphone,
10 which you might remember, I asked Richard Zappelli
11 to break up a crack house one block from where I
12 lived.

13 And guess what? The guy was evicted.
14 I have to give Richard Zappelli credit. And guess
15 where the crack guy ended up? In my basement, in
16 my basement. If he knew that I was testifying
17 here tonight, my life would be on the line. Do
18 you understand?

19 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Yes.

20 MR. LOCKEY: What happened? That's
21 what happens with Section 8. It's a lot of crap.
22 And I want it the hell out and I mean it.

23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you, sir,
24 appreciate it.

25 Tony Lewis.

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2 MR. LOCKEY: Muchos gracias, Senor.

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Mr. Lewis.

4 MR. LEWIS: Good evening. My name is
5 Anthony Lewis, and I'm Managing Director of the
6 Housing Association of Philadelphia.

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: You are closing this
8 hearing today, let me tell you.

9 MR. LEWIS: And I want to thank you for
10 the opportunity to do this. I've submitted the
11 full testimony for submission included in the
12 report, and I won't spend a lot of time repeating
13 it 'cause it's all been said today, but I just
14 wanted it to be clear that the Association is
15 opposed to any plan that explicitly talks about
16 designating zones for people.

17 The only other point that I wanted to
18 say is that whatever happens with this, we need to
19 put it to bed quickly. And, as I pointed out in
20 my testimony, I've talked to people in New York,
21 Chicago, Washington D.C., and this is becoming an
22 issue.

23 And regardless of how we want it to
24 look, it's being translated as a race issue across
25 the country, and it's not the kind of national

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2 publicity that we need in the City of
3 Philadelphia, that government officials in
4 Philadelphia are trying to develop a designated
5 area for the minorities in the City of
6 Philadelphia.

7 I talked to John White before he left,
8 and suggested to him that we were prepared at the
9 Housing Association to provide some housing
10 counseling to the public housing tenants who are
11 under the Section 8 program, that clearly -- no
12 one will question the merits of the program, but
13 clearly, no one can question that there are some
14 problems in the administration of the program.

15 But we think this is the wrong
16 solution, that we think the solution is obviously
17 some education, we think it's some counseling. We
18 think it's conflict resolution, and we think that
19 it's diversity training for the existing
20 residents.

21 But I believe that the problem can be
22 resolved, and the Housing Association wants to go
23 on record as being available to assist in any way
24 we can to bring a conclusion -- an amicable
25 solution to this for all the people involved.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay, Mr. Lewis.

3 MR. LEWIS: Yes, sir.

4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you very much.
5 Your testimony will be totally incorporated into
6 the record.

7 MR. LEWIS: Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I think we have some
9 other testimony that will be incorporated into the
10 record. Thank you, Tony.

11 MR. LEWIS: Thank you for taking me
12 this late.

13 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Don't worry about
14 it. We've been here since very early on, and we
15 waited for you, I want you to know.

16 And Jim Kenney and Jannie Blackwell and
17 I said we're not leaving until Tony Lewis comes
18 here to testify, okay?

19 MR. LEWIS: I know how you need me,
20 Councilman.

21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay. Those papers
22 are supposed to be included into the record, okay?

23 And this hearing of the Joint Committee
24 on Law and Government and License & Inspection and
25 resolution 970558 stands in recess until December

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2 families often need help in learning skills
3 necessary for independence.

4 In fact, few of the families had ever
5 lived independently or were responsible for rent;
6 therefore, learning "life skills" is essential to
7 their stability. Parents often lack skills
8 necessary for effective child-rearing.

9 For families leaving the condition of
10 homelessness and attempting to live in the
11 community, case management services are essential
12 in assisting families to break the cycle of
13 homelessness and become self-sufficient.

14 Through regular home visits -- usually
15 over the course of a year -- and frequent
16 telephone contact, our case managers help families
17 maintain their homes, develop parenting skills and
18 acquire skills necessary for self-sufficiency.
19 Without these services, families are inadequately
20 prepared for caring for their homes and families
21 and are in danger of becoming homeless again.

22 Because of a recent increase in the
23 number of Section 8 certificates, hundreds of
24 families are bypassing transitional housing as a
25 temporary housing option and moving directly from

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2 care and that children are enrolled in schools.

3 We would welcome the opportunity to
4 meet with you to provide additional information on
5 the clients with whom we work and the services we
6 provide.

7 - - -

8 2. Letter from Milton Karabell:

9 I own a property in which I have one
10 Section 8 tenant, and I wish to object to the
11 comments made by the Mayor and other parties of
12 self-interest who claim the program is a failure.

13 The Mayor is quoted as saying that
14 since there are no Section 8 tenants in Chestnut
15 Hill, the program failed. I didn't know that was
16 an aim of the program. I thought it was to get
17 housing for people who needed it.

18 The Mayor's as "Czar" wants to put
19 Section 8 tenants in 50-unit buildings. We are in
20 the process of tearing down buildings which were
21 built on this theory. A small warehouse is still
22 a warehouse, but it would be interesting to see
23 the Mayor and Czar Kromer put up such a building
24 in a Chestnut Hill; or better yet, in East Falls,
25 where the Mayor lives.

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2 The pressure to do away with scattered
3 housing seems to come primarily from politicians
4 and groups representative of neighborhoods where
5 racial tension is and has been a problem. These
6 opponents should examine their personal values,
7 seek ways to improve the social services which are
8 available to the tenants, and organize programs to
9 help reduce tensions rather than propose
10 seclusionary, racially-motivated policies which
11 are little more than a new, veiled version of
12 segregation.

13 There have also been questions raised
14 about the rent levels. My property is inspected
15 every year, and I am held to the strictest
16 interpretation of the housing code. Moreover, a
17 change of tenants almost always entails at least a
18 three-month vacancy because of the re-inspection
19 and approval process. It is an attractive rent,
20 yes, it is, but it is probably less than a third
21 of what it costs the Housing Authority to provide
22 a three-bedroom apartment in a "project" of
23 theirs.

24 My tenants have a secure private
25 entrance and exclusive use of a very large

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2 fenced-in backyard. The property is a half block
3 from an elementary school and two blocks from a
4 high school. The neighborhood is integrated and
5 problem-free. Does this sounds like a failure to
6 you?

7 Sincerely, I. Milton Karabell.

8 - - -

9 3. Testimony prepared by Anthony Lewis, Managing
10 Director, Housing Association of Delaware Valley.

11 To the Honorable City Council of
12 Philadelphia: My name is Anthony Lewis. I am the
13 Managing Director of the Housing Association of
14 Delaware Valley. The Association, a United Way
15 agency, is the nation's oldest housing advocacy
16 organization, founded here in Philadelphia in
17 1909.

18 The mission at this time, as it is
19 today, is to secure decent housing for all, in a
20 suitable environment and the elimination of racism
21 and discrimination in housing.

22 To reach this goal, the Association
23 acts as a watchdog of government programs and
24 policies, advocates of housing alternatives for
25 low- and moderate-income families, conducts

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2 research, engages in educational activities,
3 provides technical assistance to organizations and
4 groups, and operates program to assist low-income
5 families to gain, maintain or retain decent,
6 affordable housing.

7 Throughout its long history, the
8 Association has worked to improve opportunities
9 for all citizens, with certain attention directed
10 to the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, those
11 who do not speak English, and the disabled,
12 children, and the aged.

13 The Section 8 program is a
14 federally-funded rent subsidy program for
15 low-income families. The concept for the program
16 actually grew out of the 1967 National Advisory
17 commission on Civil Rights (Kerner Commission),
18 which was formed after the nation was torn apart
19 by riots in 23 Cities. The proposal was to
20 specifically expand the rent supplement program to
21 permit use of subsidies for existing housing, thus
22 increasing the reach of the program to all
23 segments.

24 I do not believe that anyone here can
25 question the merits or the success of the program.

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2 In Philadelphia, tens of thousands of low-income
3 struggling families have benefited, and many have
4 moved on to private ownership and independence as
5 a result of the Section 8 program.

6 In Philadelphia, there is low-income
7 housing crisis. As bad as it is, the Section 8
8 program has meant a great deal in keeping that
9 crisis from being even greater. That program has
10 brought millions of federal dollars to a sagging
11 real estate market and provided jobs and other
12 extended economics benefit for the local economy.

13 The Association is here today to
14 explicitly oppose any legislation or plan which
15 attempts to cluster Section 8 certificate holders
16 in "designated zones" or deny low-income citizens
17 the freedom of choice in neighborhoods and
18 housing.

19 While the much talked about proposed
20 cluster plan lacked any specific detail, as
21 reported in the media thus far, we believe that it
22 would violate Title VIII of the Federal Fair
23 Housing Act, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act,
24 and the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance. We
25 believe that the proposal violates the Federal

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2 Department of Housing and Urban Development's own
3 statutes with regards to fair housing and
4 discrimination.

5 At a minimum, it is clearly in conflict
6 with current programs and policies with regards to
7 increasing the housing opportunities of low-income
8 families and the deconcentration of the poor in
9 ghetto-type living arrangements. We believe as
10 well that this proposal to cluster Section 8
11 certificate holders raises other Constitutional
12 questions.

13 While I am not here today to label
14 anyone, and I do believe that this proposal has
15 grown out of an attempt to respond to some few
16 documentable constituent complains, the appearance
17 has unquestionably become one of race and class.
18 The fact that the complaints have come from whites
19 in largely white neighborhoods about people of
20 color moving into those traditionally white
21 neighborhoods lends itself to that argument.
22 However, to label thousands of law-abiding, decent
23 citizens as "bad" neighbors and attempt to abridge
24 their rights because of problems caused by few is
25 wrong.

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2 be done expeditiously. In the past week, I have
3 received correspondence or had conversations with
4 a public housing official, a HUD employee, and a
5 legal organization from New York, Washington,
6 D.C., and Chicago.

7 All have couched the proposed plan in
8 racial terms. Some comments have been
9 "Philadelphia is trying to become the new South,"
10 "Rendell was supposed to be all right with the
11 black people," and "You all seem to be going back
12 to the Rizzo days." This is not the national
13 image that we need. The longer this conflict is
14 allowed to go unresolved, the more of this kind of
15 negative publicity that we can expect.

16 One suggestion would be the development
17 of a joint community-government task force which
18 includes representatives of Section 8 certificate
19 holders as well as residents of areas where
20 conflicts exist. The Association stands willing
21 to assist in any way we can to bring a fair, legal
22 and equitable resolution to this issue.

23 I want to thank this honorable body for
24 this opportunity to briefly express our views.

25 - - -

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C E R T I F I C A T E

WE HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing
proceedings of the Council of the City of
Philadelphia of Tuesday, November 18 1997 were
reported and accurately by me, and that this is a
correct transcript of same.

RE: PUBLIC MEETING BEFORE COMMITTEES ON
LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNMENT, and
LICENSING & INSPECTIONS

-----,
DEBRA A. WHITEHEAD, RPR

and

_____,
JOSEPHINE CARDILLO, RPR