



FY 2017 Budget Hearing – DC Council
April 29, 2016

My name is John Hisle, Executive Director of Good Faith Communities Coalition. In preparation for this testimony, we reviewed our recent presentations. We have covered every topic important to our mission - affordable housing and homeless services for families and chronically homeless individuals.

Today you will hear from advocacy groups knowledgeable about the needs of the poor. We applaud them for their work and their commitment. They have important information for you to consider as you finalize this budget.

For Good Faith we act from a Biblical mandate to help people for whom society has not offered a fair shot at what is needed to live independently and respected in the community. Yes, poverty is costly and a complex issue. However, we feel a moral obligation, indeed a mandate, to work to right the situation.

Homeward DC is a plan that we all applaud as a pathway to a future for the disenfranchised. The Mayor's budget does not fund year two of the plan adequately.

Our recommendation: Fund year two.

TANF provides a safety net for families leading many to independent living. Proposed Council legislation would improve the structure based on best practices. There have been no hearings; the Mayor has not considered the proposal; there is no budget. The costs are undoubtedly high. **Our recommendation: consider the Council TANF legislation this year, fund as much as possible in the FY 2017 budget. And if needed, extend benefits as proposed by the Mayor for TANF participants aging-out.**

The number of new housing vouchers in the Mayor's budget will not end chronic homelessness, nor will it permit enough families and individuals to exit Rapid Re-housing to sustainable housing to make a real impact on the number waiting. **Our**

recommendation: Fund as many vouchers as possible so that the homeless still on the street, the families in shelter and those on the Housing Authority wait list have a reasonable chance for supported housing.

The easy response to these recommendations is that there is no money. However, what we propose is aligned with the city's priorities and we always find ways to fund our priorities. Others with more fiscal expertise will suggest funding solutions. Our response to "no money" is this picture:

In the alley which separates Georgetown Ministries and a new apartment building with \$5 million residences, we recently encountered a man, likely homeless, holding his head and loudly wailing at no one. The threats and demons were all within his mind. One has to wonder if the wealthy in the apartments looking down on this scene would not gladly trade any tax cut for help for this man so that their immediate world be more peaceful and he could find rest. We think so.

We are hopeful people. We have faith in the leadership of our city to do the right thing. "Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten. Nor the hope of the poor be taken away."

Thank you.