



Good Faith Communities Coalition

Taking action on homelessness and affordable housing with and for the poor in the District of Columbia

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August 1, 2017

SPREAD THE MESSAGE OF UNITY AND FRIENDSHIP IN OUR COMMUNITY

Walk down Massachusetts Ave. with your neighbors, visiting more than 10 houses of worship and other religious centers in a public celebration of solidarity and friendship among different faiths and cultures in our diverse community.



Sunday, September 10, 2017. Opening ceremony at Washington Hebrew Congregation, 1:30 PM; concluding ceremony at the Islamic Center of Washington, 5 PM.

Additional information and registration:

[InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington](#) or unitywalk@ifcmw.org.

Digging Deep into Issues

The Washington Post reported recently that one out of every three Washingtonians have marched in protest since January. Issues on the *national* scene have provided many issues worthy of protest, for and against. However, we must also respond to proposed legislation under consideration by *local* elected officials that will have a profound effect on the poor and marginalized, here and now.



In September, the Council will take action on the Homeless Services Reform Act Amendments 2017 (HSRA). HSRA dictates how homeless services are delivered in the city. The most problematic change would allow the city to time-limit family participation in the only program the city uses to move families from shelter to housing. Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) places families in apartment housing for up to one year. The family pays 30-40% of the rent and the city pays the rest. The "rest" can be substantial as the median market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in DC is over \$3000. During this subsidy period, the family receives services to build their capacity to assume the full rent after the program year.

With the proposed changes, the city could cut off rent assistance for families after one year. Since 70% of the families in shelter receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits as their only income (\$576 per month), and the increase in income for families in the program year is reported at \$64 per month, it is hard to see how they can

possibly pay full market rent after a single year of RRH support. A limited number of rental vouchers for longer term assistance are available, but they are too few to nearly match the need.

Solution? Longer term rental vouchers could be an answer, but some feel they are too expensive in the long term. Others fear that they inhibit family initiative and self-reliance. Whatever the solution, and there has to be one, expelling families from time-limited housing more than likely dooms many to living in unsafe conditions or temporary arrangements with family and friends, with homelessness always on the horizon. And no stability for the children. We can and must do better.

Digging deep into this issue: [Set Up to Fail](#) - Rapid Re-Housing in the District of Columbia. Max Tipping, Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. May 2017.

"I don't want my daughter to call DC General home." Sit with that. Let it sink in. We can not allow that to be someone's reality. Her pain is our obligation. Her journey, our responsibility. Rabbi Aaron Alexander, Rosh Hashanah, 5777.



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