



# 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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November 21, 2017

## No One Chooses to Be Poor!

This is turkey time - and turkeys are good. They are a symbol of the abundance in our country and we are grateful. We share this abundance with those in our community who are poor - turkeys ready to cook, meals shared in community.

**BUT, as faith communities committed to social justice,** our goal always is to find ways to enable households in our community who live in poverty to become independent and able to buy their own turkey - or not, as they choose.



Good Faith is committed to the belief that families and individuals living in deep poverty (0-30% of the adjusted median income or \$33,000 a year for a family of 4) should have sustainable housing - safe housing, they can afford. Given the DC housing market, **sustainable housing for the very poor is a dream difficult, if not impossible, for them to realize on their own.** Many lack the basic skills for employment or face personal barriers that make employment difficult. Jobs beyond minimum wage are most often beyond their reach. Many find themselves living in shelters.

The City's Department of Human Services supports a *Crisis Response System* that places households without a safe place to live in shelter, and then in temporary housing for one year. **In current legislation before the Council for a final vote in early December, this one-year limit, with few exceptions, will become law as a part of the *Crisis Response System*.** Rigid time frames make no sense when one's goal is to house the very poor in permanent, sustainable housing so eviction doesn't lead the family back to shelter.

This legislation has been under consideration by the Council for six months. Clergy from the Good Faith Board submitted 4 testimonies at a public hearing and at least 4 lengthy emails to the Council Committee on Human Services (Councilmember Brianne Nadeau, Chair), stating that rigid deadlines don't work and that we have a moral obligation to design a solution that does work. **Good Faith has also [signed on to a letter](#) from more 40 organizations (service providers, advocates, faith communities) asking the Council to vote "NO" on the legislation if no solution can be found for rigid time limits.** The legislation passed 11-2 on its first vote (Councilmembers Trayon White of Ward 8 and David Grosso, at large, voted no). The legislation is likely to pass again and become law on the

final vote.



**For faith communities seeking justice, turkey is good, but not enough. How can we as people of faith influence outcomes that directly affect the very poor?** The Council has approved \$36M to be spent on parking at Union Market so that the "right" tenants can be attracted. Yet for the very poor, somehow, the turkey plate is almost empty. There appear to be no funds available to do justice.

**"Tragically, in our own time, even as ostentatious wealth accumulates in the hands of the privileged few... there is a scandalous growth of poverty in broad sectors of society throughout our world. Faced with this scenario, we cannot remain passive, much less resigned.....God created the heavens and the earth for all; yet sadly some have erected barriers, walls and fences, betraying the original gift meant for all humanity, with none excluded."**

Pope Francis, First World Day of the Poor, November 19, 2017



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