



## 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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December 19, 2017

### Homeless Services Reform Act

On December 5 the District Council took final action on proposed changes to the Homeless Services Reform Act, the **law that governs what and how homeless services are delivered to needy families in the District**. The proposed changes were not without controversy, compromise and deep concern for those who find themselves homeless. **How the city helps families exit shelter for permanent housing was the most problematic area, with many unanswered questions**. The final vote (12-2) maintained the shelter exit program, inadequate as it is: one year of housing rental assistance.

**Rapid Re-Housing is the program DC uses to move all families, except those with disabilities and/or extreme vulnerability, from shelter to housing.** This national program was designed *specifically* to meet the needs of one category of the homeless population: families with capacity to be financially independent, but who have experienced a crisis which has left them homeless, unable to manage. **A year of housing assistance allows them to get back on their feet.**



**Most of the 1,300 families currently in the program don't fit the program design parameters: they have never been on their feet, have little if any income, and face significant barriers to employment, some personal and some related to the job market.** Nevertheless, all families are placed in market-rate housing (2 BR, fair market rent, \$1746 per month) with the resident as the lease holder and responsible for at least 30% of the rent. **At the end of the year, the resident exits the program and becomes responsible for the full rent.**

**Question:** How can more than half the families in the program whose income is almost entirely Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) benefits (\$508 per month for a family of three) afford market rate rent? **Answer:** They can't. **They move or are evicted.** The cycle of housing instability continues; the impact on children multiplies.

**What to do?** The enormity of the problem is daunting: 1,300 households in Rapid Rehousing with little hope for permanent housing; close to 700 families with more than 1400 children in shelter on December 3; 40,000 households on the wait list for rent subsidy. The Chair of the Human Services Committee states that there aren't enough long-term rental vouchers for everyone, only the most vulnerable. All agree that **there is no silver bullet, but what then? When and how does the community at large accept the challenge of this very complex problem as their responsibility - to work to understand and to resolve?**

### Remembering those who died homeless, on the street, in 2017

The People for Fairness Coalition vigil to remember those who died on



DC streets in 2017 begins this week with a service on Thursday, **December 21st at 5 PM at Luther Place Memorial Church (1228 Vermont Ave. NW)**, followed by a candlelight procession with casket to Freedom Plaza where there will be an overnight vigil. **ALL ARE WELCOME.** [Other activities.](#)

**We pray for those in positions of civic authority, servants of all the people. May their compassion, understanding and just actions lead to a city that measures its greatness by the care it provides for its people in need.** Rev. John Graham, Grace Episcopal Church

**Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten. Nor the hope of the poor be taken away.**



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