



January 28, 2019

Mayor Muriel Bowser  
Office of the Mayor, Wilson Bldg.  
1350 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser,

As you begin your second term and prepare a new budget, Good Faith commends your administration's accomplishments in our organization's areas of interest: affordable housing and homeless services. The accomplishments are numerous: short term family housing in all wards, homeless prevention programs, new men's shelter, substantial investment in the affordable housing stock and TANF reform, to name a few.

We also have a few observations and recommendations for your consideration. These are offered in the spirit of our faith traditions where creating and sustaining a community that is both inclusive and caring is a mandate that we all must address – with energy and determination. The "all" includes individuals, the community and the government. As faith communities, we are committed to doing our part.

- Housing Production Trust Fund. The annual \$100M investment has been a good beginning. However, the 30K deficit in affordable housing units will require additional funds, particularly to meet the biggest challenge, housing the poorest residents (0-40% AMI). Some suggest creating a second fund dedicated only to housing the very poorest. This fund would include funding to overcome the major barriers: lack of vouchers and continuing operating support for the housing over the life of the building. Those living in deep poverty have few options. We must aggressively seek solutions to address their housing needs – and fund them as a priority.
- Repair and Maintenance of Public Housing. Given the inhumane impact on the poor and marginalized who have few housing options, the Public Housing inventory can't be allowed to deteriorate to the point that the units are uninhabitable. This may be a failure of the Federal government, but waiting for them to redress this grievance is not

an option. The Housing Authority has requested funds to begin to address the extreme conditions in 2500 units. This immediate need and on-going maintenance must be budgeted. The city can't afford to lose any housing units that serve those living in extreme poverty.

- Chronically Homeless. Though progress has been made with outreach and programs such as Permanent Supportive Housing, we still regularly meet our homeless neighbors sleeping on the street or at a METRO entrance at night or trying to make a home in a tent by the side of the road. *Homeless DC* projected a foreseeable end to chronic homeless. Progress has been made, but the end is not in sight. Programs that work have been identified and implemented. A new four-year plan with specific goals and financial commitments needs to be in the new budget so that chronic homelessness does not continue to be the face of our city.

In your Outlook presentation to the city this past week, you asked the community to think big and be bold in facing our biggest challenge: affordable housing for all income levels. You committed to a citywide solution to the problem. We agree: the problem is big and it demands an "8 Ward Solution". However, given our recent experience in Wards 2 and 3, we strongly believe that this "BIG" solution must include strategies that purposely engage the whole community in conversation on the very real issues that an "8 Ward Solution" will surface. And this conversation must take place before one shovel dips into the ground: all voices heard, no blame, concern about property values acknowledged.... Unless we engage in this conversation, difficult as it may be to implement and tiresome to listen to, we will never build the inclusive community we all seek. We hope that initiating, encouraging and supporting this conversation will become part of your **BOLD** plan for the next four years.

Our healing as individuals and as a community is bound inextricably with doing justice with, for and on behalf of the strangers in our community - sojourners who live in extreme poverty, often homeless. We all hope and pray for a city where all God's children can live in peace. May God bless you and your family as we all work for justice in our time, in our city.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. James E. Terrell, Pastor, Second Baptist Church on behalf of the Good Faith Communities Coalition Board

Rev. James E. Terrell, President, Rev. John Graham, Rabbi Gerry Serotta, Ann Friedman, John Hisle.