



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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April 11, 2019

"Hands down the **number one issue among D.C. residents is affordable housing**....We are all called on to **think big and differently** about how we deliver more units in our city.... " Mayor Muriel Bowser



This "bold" rhetoric, however, did not translate into either "big" or "different" programs in the FY2020 proposed budget for the District's lowest income residents: families of four with incomes below \$35,000 and individuals who are chronically homeless. In fact, though the budget proposes substantial increments to some existing programs, there are areas where obvious needs appear to be totally overlooked:

- **There are no funds to stem the [deterioration of public housing](#): at least 2500 units are at immediate risk.** Many of these units are close to uninhabitable. This housing is where the most vulnerable find themselves - often seniors, often raising grandchildren, and persons with disabilities. In a progressive community, public housing may not be an ideal option, but if well maintained, they can provide a safe place and a supportive community. Simply put, DC can't afford to lose 2500 deeply affordable housing units.
- The Housing Production Trust Fund by law must devote 40% of its resources to **creating and preserving deeply affordable housing for extremely low-income residents. [This target has been met only once in 5 years.](#)** The challenge is that "rent" for all new low income housing units must be guaranteed by Housing Authority rent vouchers before building can commence. There are 27,000 rent-burdened households on the Housing Authority wait list for rent vouchers and vouchers seldom turn over.
- \$8.8 million has been added to the budget to fund permanent supportive housing for 325 additional individuals who are chronically homeless. The annual cost per slot is more than \$27,000. However, **no funds have been added to replace lost federal funds for street outreach staff to find and coax the hard-to-reach, chronically homeless to "try" permanent housing.** Without this trusted intermediary, many will not have the mental or emotional capacity to leave the street.

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The solutions to chronic homelessness and housing families who are essentially without resources is expensive, both in initial investment and in ongoing costs. There are hopeful signs and promising programs. The challenges, however, are not just financial. They are cultural, societal and human, and therefore, necessarily complex.

We must ask: is DC investing as much as it should in this

prosperous time to meet the needs of residents living in deep poverty? Are we investing in the right programs? Are the programs well run and cost effective? And are the residents targeted for assistance getting a "fair shot" as promised by the Mayor?

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In shelter April 7, 2019

2489 individuals in shelter, including 343 families with 732 children in emergency motel shelter and 927 single men and 366 single women in low barrier shelters. These numbers do not include families in the new short-term family housing.

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



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