

S.1518: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP TO END HOMELESSNESS ACT OF 2007

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS**

**THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, CHAIRMAN
THE HONORABLE RICHARD A. SHELBY, RANKING MEMBER**



**TESTIMONY OF ADRIAN M. FENTY
MAYOR
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 2007

Chairman Dodd, Ranking Member Shelby, Senator Reed, my name is Adrian M. Fenty. I am the fifth elected Mayor of the District of Columbia. I am pleased to testify today in support of the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007. Ending homelessness in the District of Columbia is a major priority of my administration.

I would like to briefly describe the District Government's efforts to end homelessness in the nation's capital, and then to explain why we support Senate Bill 1518.

Homelessness is a significant challenge for the District, as in many other major cities. The homeless population has decreased in our city, but the high cost of housing and the high rate of poverty in many of our neighborhoods are still major concerns.

According to 2007 data, on any given night we have more than 5,700 homeless residents, including 1,760 who are chronically homeless. This represents a 6.5% decrease from 2006. These 5,700 include residents in emergency shelters, transitional housing and on the street. We also have more than 18,000 people who identify as homeless on our housing choice voucher program waiting list – a waiting list that now numbers over 50,000.

The District continues to increase its stock of affordable housing, including permanent supportive housing, where 38% of our homeless population resides. This is an increase of 11% over last year and means that 3,582 formerly homeless people are now living in permanent housing.

We are thankful to the Department of Housing and Urban Development for its support of the District's Continuum of Care housing needs. We are just submitting our new application requesting more than 17 million dollars in funding for many important renewal projects and five new permanent housing programs. This application reflects the city's commitment to the objectives laid out in our Homeless No More Plan, implemented in 2004 with a goal of ending homelessness in 10 years.

We are also committed to a Housing First strategy that focuses on first getting a roof over one's head, and then providing the needed services to keep people in permanent housing. And we have created a new, locally-funded rent subsidy program to provide permanent housing to hundreds of homeless residents in the Nation's capitol.

Our efforts in the District are spearheaded by our local Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH) for the purpose of facilitating interagency, cabinet-level leadership in planning, policymaking, program development and monitoring. The ICH also includes advocates, former or currently homeless individuals and providers.

The District Government supports the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007. This bill is consistent with my administration's comprehensive housing strategy.



The Act makes several significant changes. It consolidates and simplifies current funding programs, Supportive Housing, Shelter Plus Care and Moderate Rehabilitation/SRO, into a single Community Homeless Assistance Program. It allows flexibility in funding prevention services and programs for the chronically homeless, including families and people with disabilities. It also increases accountability and rewards high performance – approaches my administration and I have begun to implement throughout the District government.

This Act has a significant focus on prevention, including separate funding for doubled up households – one of our highest indicators of being at risk of becoming homeless. The prevention focus is important and builds off of our successful Emergency Rental Assistance Program, begun in December 2006, which helps families that may become homeless because of a significant event in their life – loss of a job, emergency medical expenses. This program helps these families stay in their current living situations instead of becoming homeless. Since January, we have assisted almost 1,500 households with their rental payments --providing an average of \$1,713 per household to keep them in their current living situation and not become homeless.

Mr. Chairman, I believe having a single homeless person is too many in the nation's capital of the world's most prosperous democracy. Having almost 6,000 homeless people is tragic. But I am fully confident that we can end this tragedy with the continued support of our federal government. I urge you to pass Senate Bill 1518 without delay.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering any questions.

