

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSING AUTHORITY

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BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS EMERGENCY MEETING

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THURSDAY,  
JANUARY 17, 2019

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The Board of Commissioners met in the Executive Director's Conference Room, 1133 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C., at 12:30 p.m., Neil Albert, Chairman, presiding.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

NEIL ALBERT, Chairman  
KENNETH D. COUNCIL, Commissioner  
LEJUAN STRICKLAND, Commissioner  
ANTONIO TALIAFERRO, Commissioner  
FRANSELENE ST. JEAN, Commissioner  
NAKEISHA NEAL JONES, Commissioner  
AQUARIUS VANN-GHASRI, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT:

TYRONE GARRETT, Executive Director  
ALETHEA McNAIR, Manager of Board Relations

COMMISSIONER(S) ABSENT:

BRIAN KENNER, Commissioner  
KEN GROSSINGER, Commissioner  
WILLIAM SLOVER, Vice Chairman

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AGENDA

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DRAFT

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 12:39 p.m.

3 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Good afternoon, everyone.

4 My name is Neil Albert. And I chair the Board  
5 of Commissioners of the D.C. Housing Authority.  
6 And this is an emergency Board meeting being held  
7 today, January 17, 2019 at our headquarters.

8 If you've been to our Board meetings  
9 before, this is a reminder. If this is your first  
10 time, we're asking you to silence your devices.

11 And we generally observe a particular  
12 decorum during our meetings. You guys are all  
13 adults. And so you'll know how to behave. But  
14 we're going to have an opportunity for people to  
15 speak here today. And so we ask that you give them  
16 a listening ear and don't interrupt as they speak.

17 At this time, I'm going to actually turn  
18 it over to our secretary to establish a quorum.

19 MS. McNAIR: Thank you. Commissioner  
20 Neal Jones?

21 COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: Present.

22 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Ortiz Gaud?

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1 Commissioner Slover? Commissioner St. Jean?

2 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: Present.

3 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Strickland?

4 COMMISSIONER STRICKLAND: Present.

5 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Taliaferro?

6 COMMISSIONER TALIAFERRO: Present.

7 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner

8 Vann-Ghasri?

9 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Present.

10 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Council?

11 COMMISSIONER COUNCIL: Present.

12 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Grossinger?

13 Commissioner Kenner? Chairman Albert?

14 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Present.

15 MS. McNAIR: You have seven

16 Commissioners present. You have a quorum.

17 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you very much.

18 Today we actually just have one resolution that

19 we're going to ponder. But before we do that, I

20 want to take this opportunity to welcome our newest

21 Commissioner, Commissioner Lejuan Strickland, who

22 was just appointed by the mayor to our Board. So

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1 please join me in giving him a round of applause  
2 as we welcome him.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: It is our custom to,  
5 before the resolutions are presented to allow  
6 members of the public to comment on the resolution.

7 The resolution today is Resolution 19-01, which  
8 would adopt a framework for the stabilization and  
9 repositioning of DCHA's portfolio of properties.

10 We've got a number of people that have  
11 signed up to speak about the resolution. It is  
12 our custom to, since I see a number of non-residents  
13 signed up, to give our residents the opportunity  
14 to speak first for five minutes, and then  
15 non-residents, three minutes to speak.

16 So I'm going to call on Linda Brown,  
17 who was not ready, to come forward. Linda,  
18 welcome.

19 MS. BROWN: Thank you. Good  
20 afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Linda Brown.

21 I live in Greenleaf Senior in Ward 6. I'm here  
22 today about the resolution.

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1           I have concerns about the vouchers that  
2 will be given to the residents to reposition them  
3 in other places. I have a daughter who is disabled.  
4 She's a disabled adult.

5           And so, when you are issuing these  
6 vouchers, I'm wondering if you have considered that  
7 there is a waiting list for these vouchers. And  
8 how are you going to prioritize the vouchers that  
9 you are going to give out to the residents? And  
10 how are you going to ensure the residents that these  
11 vouchers would be accepted in other places?

12           With these developers, a lot of that  
13 is not considered. So it's like if you are going  
14 to, if you want to live somewhere else and those  
15 vouchers are not acceptable, then you can't move  
16 in there. So that's like being uprooted and not  
17 being able to live a place where you want to live  
18 in the community that you want to live in if those  
19 vouchers aren't accepted.

20           So how are you going to ensure your  
21 relationship with these developers that the public  
22 or the residents will have some kind of safety

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1 measures that they will be able to move in where  
2 they choose to move with those vouchers?

3 MR. GARRETT: Okay. Thank you, Ms.  
4 Brown. First, I want to say I truly appreciate  
5 your question and your concerns that you've  
6 actually raised.

7 But I just need to take us back just  
8 one step for not only the Board, but also the public  
9 itself, is that the Housing Authority across the  
10 board, DCHA, right now what we're talking about  
11 with 19-01 is to adopt a framework and merely a  
12 framework to look at our portfolio based on what  
13 we're facing in terms of environmental and lead  
14 concerns throughout the entire 8,000 units that  
15 we actually have.

16 What we're trying to do is ask the Board  
17 for support to create a framework that we will then  
18 bring back to them on a case-by-case basis to make  
19 determinations about how we handle each property.

20 So use of vouchers may be one particular vehicle  
21 or it may not be.

22 And we haven't gotten there for every

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1 single site. And this is the idea of this  
2 particular resolution is to take us there to create  
3 a guideline that we can utilize, so when we talk  
4 to the public, when we talk to our residents, we  
5 can give them all those explanations of what we're  
6 trying to do.

7 When you're dealing with a relocation  
8 voucher, if that was the case, and we're not saying  
9 that it is, but hypothetically, if we were to use  
10 a relocation voucher, there would be a process in  
11 which we would adopt a clear relocation plan that  
12 has input from the residents and also gives clear  
13 guidelines of how we would proceed to identify  
14 opportunities for residents, if that's what they  
15 chose to utilize.

16 MS. BROWN: Okay. A lot of these  
17 properties are, as you said, are in bad shape.  
18 So, when you're talking about relocating the  
19 residents, where are you going to relocate them  
20 to, because they're, the properties or the  
21 structures that you're talking about, a lot of them  
22 are in bad shape, worse than the place that you're

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1 moving from?

2 MR. GARRETT: I don't disagree with  
3 you. And that's what we're trying to do. We're  
4 taking this and embracing it in a manner that takes  
5 that into consideration.

6 But I have to tell you, some of our  
7 options don't always include actually relocating  
8 residents from the current unit that they're in.

9 Some processes could be something different, which  
10 could allow for rehabilitation with residents  
11 remaining on site. So not everyone has to be  
12 relocated.

13 It all, it's based on a case-by-case  
14 basis and an analysis of what type of redevelopment  
15 or rehabilitation we want to do to that particular  
16 site, it at all. I mean, in some cases, we might  
17 not have to do anything. It may be a stable  
18 complex. That will not be on any recommendation  
19 to move forward with any repositioning.

20 MS. BROWN: Okay. So, and the other  
21 question is how are you going to get this  
22 information to the residents. How are you going

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1 to rehabilitate them and understanding what you're  
2 trying to do?

3 MR. GARRETT: That's of the, that's the  
4 top of the list. The top of the list is to educate  
5 not only our Board of Commissioners about our  
6 processes and things that we're going to do, but  
7 also to deal directly with the residents. Again,  
8 residents will have input and knowledge of every  
9 step that we're trying to take.

10 One thing that I did hear about this  
11 particular resolution was that how transparent it  
12 actually was. And that's something that under my  
13 administration that we've tried to instill over  
14 the last 18 months, which is a level of integrity,  
15 responsibility, and accountability so that  
16 everyone knows exactly what we're trying to do.  
17 There are no smoke and mirrors games to my  
18 administration.

19 There is change, yes. And change can  
20 be difficult for many individuals and especially  
21 when we're dealing with lives.

22 But we have to recognize we have a legal

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1 and a moral obligation to do something. Based on  
2 our portfolio, based on its current state, we have  
3 to take some steps forward. And this is just our  
4 first step in that direction to change the portfolio  
5 of the Housing Authority. Thank you.

6 MS. BROWN: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.  
8 Next we're going to call Lori Leibowitz. Lori,  
9 you have three minutes. And welcome.

10 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: How are you?

12 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Okay, thanks. How are  
13 you?

14 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Good.

15 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Good afternoon.

16 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

17 My name is Lori Leibowitz. And I am an attorney  
18 at Neighborhood Legal Services Program, a local  
19 organization that represents thousands of D.C.  
20 residents for free in a variety of cases, including  
21 housing cases.

22 Before I start with my points that I

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1 was going to make, I just want to flag that I  
2 realized while Ms. Brown was speaking that the  
3 version of the, of Exhibit A attached to the  
4 resolution that was given out when we walked in  
5 is different from what I printed off the website  
6 yesterday. There are more numbers in it, in  
7 Exhibit A. So I don't know which -- I didn't have  
8 a chance to see which, what's different or what's  
9 changed. But it is different. So --

10 MR. GARRETT: We can get you a hard copy

11 --

12 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Well, I have the new  
13 version.

14 MR. GARRETT: You have it? Okay.

15 MS. LEIBOWITZ: But I haven't had a  
16 chance -- I just noticed it now. So I haven't had  
17 a chance to look that over. And I suspect some  
18 other folks haven't as well.

19 But what I was going to say is we at  
20 Neighborhood Legal Services and as a D.C. resident  
21 have long known that there are serious conditions  
22 problems in public housing in D.C. I spend a lot

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1 of time going out and visiting tenants.

2 And I'm really glad that DCHA went  
3 through and did this full assessment and is talking  
4 about making plans and actually making a plan to  
5 make plans to really address these major issues.

6 I think that's huge. I think that's great. Thank  
7 you. Now, here's the but. The but always comes  
8 with us.

9 What I'm concerned about is my reading  
10 of the resolution is the only solutions that appear  
11 to be under considerations are solutions that take  
12 public housing out of the public housing portfolio  
13 and move it to Section 8 or to other portfolios  
14 which necessitate private ownership. Even if that  
15 private ownership is a wholly owned subsidiary,  
16 it's not quite public housing anymore.

17 And there doesn't seem to be any kind  
18 of exploration of can we get the D.C. government  
19 to pay for some or all of these repairs in order  
20 to keep this into public housing.

21 And I think it's important that we  
22 consider that option in addition to other options

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1 especially, and I think it's very important that  
2 the options include really thinking about  
3 preventing displacement and keeping people in their  
4 communities.

5 I was at Park Morton earlier this week  
6 talking to folks who have really serious conditions  
7 issues in their units. And I asked every single  
8 one of them like what do you want. Do you want  
9 -- no, no, I don't want to move. I want to stay  
10 here. Even as they're telling me about what's  
11 wrong with their unit, I want to stay here, I want  
12 to stay in my community.

13 So I hope that as this, as DCHA moves  
14 forward making plans that you will work with the  
15 advocates, that you will work with the residents,  
16 that you will work with the D.C. council and the  
17 mayor to develop options that, a, keep our public  
18 housing public and, b, really prevent displacement  
19 and really help people stay in the communities that  
20 they have developed over time, because it is  
21 important for people to get to stay in their  
22 communities. Thank you.

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1 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much,  
2 Lori.

3 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I have a  
4 question. I'm going to give you a hypothetical.

5 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Sure.

6 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I live in  
7 Park Morton. I just came to the Board with ten  
8 residents, not the Board of Commissioners, the  
9 resident have identified an adjective and when we  
10 place those adjectives into a formula of words,  
11 you are now living in a condemned unit.

12 If your unit is, have lead, asbestos,  
13 you're complaining about your balcony that's  
14 deteriorating, now the Board didn't identify it.

15 You did.

16 Now, once you made all those  
17 identification, and I'm a family Commissioner.  
18 Now, once you made all those -- now, I've heard  
19 this over and over. Now, when I look at what you  
20 are saying, and I'm applying it with 24 CFR, and  
21 24 CFR is not just about organizing.

22 Whether you like it or not, the District

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1 of Columbia is a municipal corporation. It is not  
2 a state nor it's a county. We only have policies,  
3 guidelines, municipal regulations in Housing and  
4 Urban Development. Now, we all know that.

5 Now, once I do that and you come along  
6 and somebody else next door to me, the majority  
7 of them, they want to stay there. Now, one of my  
8 fiduciary responsibility is to money. I'm a  
9 resident first. I'm looking at your life. So I  
10 didn't identify where you live at. I live in  
11 Potomac Gardens. I don't identify where you live  
12 at. You do.

13 So, once you make that identification,  
14 you have an 11-member Board. I'm going to be  
15 outvoted, because whoever was your organizer or  
16 whoever -- and when I say organizer, I'm not talking  
17 about Empower DC, et cetera. It could be your  
18 executive board or it could be a resident advocating  
19 for residents.

20 Now, the next thing I know you'll be  
21 sitting in front of us telling us who you're suing  
22 because we have allowed them, the person that

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1 identified their own. And so we're going to go  
2 along with the masses. So we're going to let you  
3 stay in Park Morton, et cetera. So now when the  
4 ceiling fall down on your head, how much is the  
5 lawsuit? Who will be sued? And who's going to  
6 represent those tenants?

7 So, when there's a Commissioner in my  
8 position when it comes to a resolution, I'm only  
9 speaking for Aquarius Vann-Ghasri, the elect family  
10 Commissioners. There's only three Commissioners  
11 up here that's elected. Okay?

12 So, now, even though my peers have gone  
13 that far with me, you share with me what should  
14 I do when I know it wasn't the Board that identified  
15 your community as being condemned. You did.

16 Now, you already know about how the  
17 voucher goes because there's too -- first of all,  
18 if I come to your legal aid, you're the first one  
19 will give me my first lesson if DCHA don't.

20 So, if I already know that I live in  
21 Park Morton, this is a process that's been going  
22 on since the Honorable Marie Wittfield, who signed

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1 off on Park Morton to have a new community. And  
2 it's not my fault, because even the Housing  
3 Authority or maybe it's you, you know, your  
4 organization.

5 All I know as the Commissioner, nobody  
6 like hearing my mouth, because I talk too long,  
7 because I want to give you the history of your  
8 community. I want you to know what the leader did  
9 before you. I want you to understand what role  
10 you have played in it.

11 And now, you're going to place a  
12 position for three elected Commissioners that's  
13 on this Board to make a decision. Do we save lives?  
14 Do we make sure that the Housing Authority gets  
15 sued, because you're the one who identified your  
16 community? And in doing that, whomever is the  
17 director of the Housing Authority is going to send  
18 inspectors out there. Now, they find that's right.

19 So, now, you got -- I'm looking at that area.

20 Now, we're talking about  
21 gentrification. And we are talking about public  
22 housing. Now, you have two types of public

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1 housing. You have traditional, conventional  
2 public housing. And I don't live in conventional  
3 public housing in Potomac Gardens. But Park Morton  
4 does.

5 Now, what's the difference? In  
6 Potomac Gardens, in order for it to have a life  
7 cycle that was more than 30 years old, we had to  
8 have assets management to come in. That was a  
9 change, because without it, we would have never  
10 lived on that hill this long for anything else to  
11 happen.

12 Now, let's flip it. Now, let's look  
13 at other public housing communities around here.  
14 Right up the street from you, whether you know  
15 it or not, there's Julius Hobson Plaza. The  
16 residents that live there never said tore them down.

17 What they did was they had a class first. They  
18 understood real estate. And I'm not talking about  
19 Sursum Corda. I'm talking about 80 New York  
20 Avenue.

21 Now, right today, you see the average  
22 person that lives there have no education, came

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1 under the Barry administration, had civil service  
2 exams, had a job. And to date, they own their  
3 condos. Bates Street, they own their houses.  
4 That's under Jasper Burnett and the honorable late  
5 Bob Moore.

6 I have a problem as a Commissioner when  
7 we all are so intelligent. You have resident  
8 council presidents that sit before me just like  
9 you who have been there for 20 years. Now, you  
10 want to flip. And you have new residents coming  
11 every day.

12 The question is not how residents get  
13 informed. The question is how will they  
14 continuously to get informed without a cell phone,  
15 without coming down here. Okay. I don't know how  
16 to read. So, when you mail something to me, that  
17 don't mean nothing either.

18 So now, I'm caught, I'm really caught,  
19 because I don't come down here and say what I need  
20 to say because just because your apartment is  
21 condemned -- and I'm going to say it like it is.

22 See, the man that lives with me in my

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1 public housing community, he's not on the lease.

2 But what I do is get his friends. They're going  
3 to come in and plaster. They're going to make sure  
4 that I live in -- somehow mentally, here's what  
5 I need you to do is to tell this Housing Authority  
6 that when we're living like that and if a family  
7 decides to paint their unit and keep the receipt  
8 and they deduct that from our rent, because many  
9 of us, we live in homes.

10 Barry Farm was somebody's home. Every  
11 house in Barry Farm didn't look like somebody's  
12 house. I know of residents that live in Barry Farm  
13 that they did their own painting. They did their  
14 own plastering. They didn't use public housing  
15 refrigerators. They had their own. And if  
16 necessary, they may have brought their own stove.

17 Now they're in trouble. They're in  
18 trouble because they didn't go through the right  
19 proper procedures, and I'm about to end it, to hook  
20 up the stove.

21 So now, when you look at that whole big  
22 scenario, and this has happened nationally, the

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1 question is what do we do. How do you pass a  
2 resolution? Who do you listen to, your  
3 constituents, or do you listen to the facts?

4 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you,  
5 Commissioner.

6 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Thank you. I mean, I  
7 think --

8 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Lori, and if you want  
9 to respond quickly.

10 MS. LEIBOWITZ: Very quickly, I think  
11 in answer to your question, I 100 percent advocate  
12 that things need to be fixed, no argument from me  
13 there, and that people should not be stuck living  
14 in places where I would not want to live with my  
15 children.

16 What I'm asking is that we explore all  
17 the available options, including potentially  
18 advocating with the D.C. government to put money  
19 into the repairs, and that we engage advocates and  
20 residents in the conversation about, you know, here  
21 are the options that we've developed.

22 Here are all the numbers. Here's where

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1 the problems are. Here are the bedroom sizes of  
2 where the problems are, and then how do we solve  
3 this problem that we explore all the options, not  
4 just some of the options, and that we really engage  
5 the community in the solution.

6 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: All right. Thanks  
7 so much.

8 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Thank you  
9 so much.

10 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Amanda Korber?  
11 Welcome.

12 MS. KORBER: Thank you. Thank you for  
13 the opportunity to speak today. My name is Amanda  
14 Korber. I am a staff attorney at the Legal Aid  
15 Society of the District of Columbia. I'm here to  
16 share Legal Aid's concerns about this resolution  
17 specifically and also about the direction DCHA  
18 appears to be going with its public housing stock  
19 generally.

20 We have never, the advocacy community  
21 has never rejected the notion that the District's  
22 public housing is in need of serious repair. What

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1 we do reject is a resolution, this resolution that  
2 only requires DCHA to explore one way out of this  
3 problem, especially when that one way out of the  
4 problem is privatization.

5 Privatizing public housing is not new  
6 in D.C. And we have seen firsthand that  
7 privatization, what privatization has done to  
8 public housing tenants and their homes.

9 Prior recent private developments are  
10 already falling apart and in disrepair and have  
11 management companies that don't know or don't care  
12 to follow critical public housing rules, which puts  
13 all public housing tenants at risk.

14 It seems like you understand these  
15 concerns. In your resolution, you note that  
16 privatizing public housing can lead to the loss  
17 of tenants' rights, to DCHA's loss of control over  
18 the economic value of its properties, and just loss  
19 of control over the properties generally, the loss  
20 of long-term affordability, and the degradation  
21 in tenants' quality of life.

22 These concerns that you accurately lay

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1 out in your resolution are precisely why DCHA should  
2 be required to explore alternatives, such as  
3 working with the local District government to  
4 preserve our public housing stock before rushing  
5 to privatize to dig ourselves out of this problem.

6 Therefore, Legal Aid requests the Board  
7 require DCHA to do the following.

8 Share with tenants and advocates all  
9 reports in its possession regarding the condition  
10 of its public housing properties and the projected  
11 costs of needed repairs so that we can adequately  
12 assess any plan the Agency puts forth to resolve  
13 these problems.

14 Prepare multiple plans for the  
15 preservation of public housing, including at least  
16 one that does not involve privatizing and selling  
17 off people's homes, and working with tenants and  
18 advocates to develop these plans before presenting  
19 them to the Board.

20 It's alarming to Legal Aid that a  
21 resolution as important as this is being considered  
22 before DCHA has talked to tenants and advocates

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1 to get input about what its priorities should be  
2 while developing its redevelopment framework.

3 We would urge the Board to delay voting  
4 on this resolution. But if you are going to pass  
5 it, we urge you to require DCHA to, at a minimum,  
6 consult with its residents and incorporate their  
7 input before making plans that can change the course  
8 of their lives.

9 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.

10 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I'd like to  
11 say something on that, too. As I stated, Potomac  
12 Gardens is private. The only problem I have with  
13 privatization is the unions, because the  
14 maintenance and those who staff it, they are not  
15 in the union.

16 And what I see there is this. I see  
17 that living in Potomac Gardens, when my manager  
18 has three and four and five complaints because the  
19 person that came in your unit did not prepare it  
20 properly, they fire him. They don't have to go  
21 through no grievance. You maybe can get your  
22 unemployment.

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1           If you are managed by DCHA, you're in  
2 the union and you have the right to grieve. So  
3 the only thing I see with, when you privatize a  
4 public housing, you're cutting out the right of  
5 a person with the union. So that's something that  
6 you have to think about with that.

7           Now, let's look at the trends. Sursum  
8 Corda was privatized. And the District of Columbia  
9 Housing Authority owned those 29 units, townhouses  
10 that's called a turnkey. With Sursum Corda being  
11 private, it outlasted the life circle. When  
12 gentrification came through, every tenant in there  
13 received a check in their name with dollars, along  
14 with a federal voucher.

15           And I want to know why Legal Aid is not  
16 looking to make sure that the rest of the  
17 communities that may be at threat will educate our  
18 resident councils how to make that happen in their  
19 communities. You already have a model. So why  
20 are you keep on trying to keep the wheel going?

21           We cannot keep looking at what has  
22 already been done. Now, the only thing we need

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1 now in the District of Columbia, we need your  
2 organization to get out there and write the perfect  
3 community benefit program for economically  
4 challenged individuals.

5 Now, we had under the Marion Barry  
6 administration, like let me give you example like  
7 James Creek. Can James Creek be something that  
8 the city would allow only public housing residents  
9 to purchase their home in James Creek for one  
10 dollar?

11 You can only -- in order to do that,  
12 you have to live in public housing or you have to  
13 live in the housing choice voucher program. And  
14 those residents in James Creek that do not have  
15 that vision, then the Housing Authority moved them.

16 And those of us who have that vision, we have the  
17 right to purchase them homes as is just like a  
18 lottery. That's thinking out of the box.

19 And we have residents in public housing  
20 that can do that. Public housing residents have  
21 degrees from PhDs to masters and AAs. They just  
22 never had the opportunity to be employed. So what

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1 are we going to do about it?

2 MS. KORBER: I agree with everything  
3 you are saying, which is why I think it's so  
4 important that the Housing Authority, and I know  
5 Mr. Garrett talked about getting community input,  
6 why I think it's so important to get their input,  
7 because I think the residents have the most valuable  
8 ideas in --

9 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Mr.  
10 Garrett came to my property, Potomac Gardens. He  
11 received the input. The input is I support  
12 privatization. My community don't. They want a  
13 change.

14 So I told Mr. Garrett the change is  
15 we'll go back to DCHA and let DCHA manage it. It's  
16 already have lived a 15-year life cycle with  
17 privatization. It was a success.

18 That's why I'm not running for the  
19 Commissioner either, because I want to go down with  
20 assets management and I want people to see a trend.

21 And when Mr. Garrett says that we've done something  
22 for 15 years and it needs now to be turned back

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1 over to DCHA to see what, because DCHA should be  
2 able to do that, let me go on record and say this.

3 As residents, if you're not educated  
4 and you're listening to the wrong messenger and  
5 you don't want to educate yourself, you're going  
6 to get what you ask for. And when you get it and  
7 living in a municipal corporation, please don't  
8 come back up here and say you didn't know, because  
9 your resident council president's been trying to  
10 tell you. The advocacy group been trying to tell  
11 you. The attorney's been trying to tell you.

12 But, guess what? If you're going to  
13 have a democracy, the democracy is whatever the  
14 majority want, I'm going to make sure you get it.

15 And when you live with it, remember this. You're  
16 speak it into existence.

17 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you,  
18 Commissioner. Thank you, Amanda.

19 MS. KORBER: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Appreciate your  
21 comments. Rebecca Lindhurst? Welcome.

22 MS. LINDHURST: Thank you. Excuse me.

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1 I have a little frog in my throat. Good afternoon.  
2 My name is Rebecca Lindhurst. I'm a managing  
3 attorney at Bread for the City's legal clinic.  
4 It's good to see you all.

5 Thank you for the opportunity to speak  
6 today. Admittedly, in the 16 years I've been doing  
7 this work, this is the first time I've ever  
8 testified before the Board of Commissioners.

9 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Well, welcome again.

10 MS. LINDHURST: The fear invoked by  
11 this resolution, however, left me no choice but  
12 to come and speak today.

13 Over the last two decades, advocates  
14 have participated in countless robust discussions  
15 with D.C. Housing Authority. We've discussed  
16 everything from pet policies to how to deal with  
17 the unwieldy waiting list. The collaboration has  
18 been fruitful and, in my opinion, led to better  
19 programs and policies for the thousands who depend  
20 on DCHA for affordable housing.

21 However, I've been disappointed in  
22 DCHA's current unwillingness to work with

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1 advocates. Bread for the City, Washington Legal  
2 Clinic for the Homeless, and Legal Aid, and other  
3 organizations have long been partners with this  
4 agency in thinking through difficult policy  
5 initiatives and ensuring that our clients'  
6 interests are protected.

7 The exclusion of advocates in  
8 discussions about the direction of the agency over  
9 the past few months is deeply concerning. Our  
10 agencies have fought alongside DCHA for decades  
11 to provide housing for those most in need. We have  
12 the historical knowledge and institutional memory  
13 that can benefit its current leaders, yet we've  
14 been shut out.

15 Our ask today is that advocates get a  
16 seat at the table and that we get answers to the  
17 questions we've been posing for some time. We'd  
18 like to have a conversation about the problems  
19 presented by this resolution. We'd like to see  
20 the data that's available. While advocates have  
21 asked for data, we've been in the dark about the  
22 findings.

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1           We'd like to discuss an analysis of the  
2 cost of all the competing options, including an  
3 option that doesn't result in the loss or  
4 privatization of public housing.

5           We'd like to consider with you whether  
6 renovation can be done without displacement. We'd  
7 like to know what opportunities will exist for  
8 resident input and community involvement.

9           Also, we'd like to consider what, if  
10 any, conversations have happened with the city  
11 council about funding all of the potential options.

12           The resolution appears to be a vaguely  
13 worded blueprint to give DCHA the power to make  
14 decisions about communities without any input, but  
15 more likely appears to be a threat to public housing  
16 as we know it.

17           And more concerning, it includes the  
18 ability to get around the commitment to build first  
19 at some properties, which should be a priority for  
20 everyone involved.

21           Frankly, the possibilities for  
22 residents of public housing presented by this

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1 resolution are terrifying. While we clearly don't  
2 want residents to remain in housing that is unsafe  
3 or unhealthy, moving forward with an emergency  
4 resolution is not the answer.

5 As you know from a historical  
6 perspective, D.C. has a terrible track record of  
7 destroying communities of color through  
8 redevelopment. Beginning with the destruction of  
9 a predominantly African American community in  
10 Southwest in the '60s and more recently the  
11 demolition of Arthur Capper/Carrollsborg, the  
12 redevelopment has displaced thousands of people  
13 of color.

14 One of my first cases was representing  
15 a woman who was one of the last residents living  
16 in the family section of Arthur Capper. She is  
17 still bouncing around with her voucher, still  
18 unstably housed.

19 Finally, I'll note that this resolution  
20 seems to make an end run around the commitment to  
21 build first at sites like Park Morton. That site  
22 provides a real opportunity to do redevelopment

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1 in a thoughtful way. Ensuring that no residents  
2 are displaced from the community prevents tragedies  
3 at Southwest and Capper/Carrollsburg.

4 While not immediate, it's the right  
5 thing to do so that residents who have lived in  
6 that neighborhood for decades can continue to live  
7 in a prospering community and enjoy the amenities  
8 that have built up around them in recent years.  
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much --

11 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I've got a  
12 question --

13 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Can you hold a  
14 second?

15 MR. GARRETT: Commissioner  
16 Vann-Ghasri, thank you. I just want to speak.

17 I believe, Commissioners, you also know  
18 that in our process of bringing this resolution  
19 to you and earlier in our symposium, Mackenzie  
20 worked with us. Mackenzie also did interviews with  
21 stakeholders, understanding that we were going to  
22 be bringing ideas and concepts like this to the

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1 table.

2 And they actually spoke to Ms.  
3 Lindhurst I think directly about her position on  
4 our portfolio and some of our efforts that we were  
5 going to be taking. So there was a direct  
6 communication.

7 In addition, just in December I held  
8 a meeting with the advocates, as we do every three  
9 months. I come to the meetings. And we discussed  
10 the overall portfolio and the stabilization and  
11 the need to garner partners.

12 And there was the request for a  
13 subcommittee to be created with the Housing  
14 Authority and the actual advocates. And that  
15 occurred actually in December.

16 And I believe there was a  
17 representative from Bread for the City who asked  
18 for a link to our risk assessments, which identified  
19 all of our properties which we had done lead risk  
20 assessments. So that analysis was available, and  
21 it actually was offered and requested and offered  
22 at our last advocate meeting.

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1           So there is dialogue between the  
2 Housing Authority and the advocates. Whether or  
3 not we agree on all terms, that remains to be seen.

4           And we're going to try our best to work through  
5 it.

6           We're not trying by any means to  
7 displace anyone. And I need to make that clear.

8           We're looking for an opportunity to figure out  
9 a way to sustain and stabilize our portfolio as  
10 it currently exists, understanding our needs of  
11 \$1.3 billion over 10 years with 343 needed in the  
12 next year.

13           And when we talk about what are our  
14 options, yes, maintaining public housing in its  
15 current state is an option that we are going to  
16 explore. But it will take a strong commitment from  
17 various stakeholders. And if we don't have that  
18 commitment, then we're going to have to explore  
19 other options that may be outside of the  
20 conventional public housing approach.

21           But asking the District government for  
22 support is on our priority list. That's one thing

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1 that we are doing and have done thus far. And  
2 there's going to be ongoing communications about  
3 that.

4 So I don't want anyone to think that  
5 we're not exploring all the opportunities, the only  
6 thing that we can do is to go outside of the Section  
7 9 program. That's not the case. And in terms of  
8 displacing residents or purposely displacing  
9 residents, that's not something my administration  
10 is going to do.

11 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you.

12 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Rebecca, I  
13 just want to know this. In your role as Bread for  
14 the City, and this deals with vouchers, have Bread  
15 for the City yet did any type of trend on rental  
16 discrimination among people of color using the  
17 vouchers once they received the vouchers during  
18 relocation?

19 MS. LINDHURST: I actually skipped  
20 that paragraph of my testimony because I was out  
21 of time. So I --

22 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: You have

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1 the right now to answer that question.

2 MS. LINDHURST: Thank you. We have  
3 serious concerns about relocating folks with  
4 vouchers. The market is saturated. We get calls,  
5 so many calls from residents who are trying to use  
6 a voucher and can't use it because landlords are  
7 discriminating against them, landlords don't want  
8 to take vouchers. There isn't enough enforcement  
9 of the non-discrimination against voucher holders  
10 in the District.

11 And frankly, most folks are using their  
12 vouchers in neighborhoods that are east of the river  
13 or in neighborhoods where there isn't access to  
14 public transportation, isn't access to grocery  
15 stores or doctors or other needs in the community.

16 So, when we look at folks who are living  
17 in properties that are in neighborhoods that are  
18 developing, we need to keep those residents in those  
19 neighborhoods, because giving folks a voucher  
20 really ends up with folks bouncing around, living  
21 in substandard properties.

22 I know you all inspect properties. But

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1           there are so many voucher properties that are not  
2           in compliance with the housing code.  And folks  
3           with poor credit or have a landlord-tenant eviction  
4           case on their record, it's almost impossible for  
5           them to use a voucher.

6                       And to top it all off, DCHA has  
7           instituted a new policy where they're snatching  
8           people's vouchers back if they don't use them fast  
9           enough.  And so we've got people who finally get  
10          a voucher and then lose it because the market can't  
11          take vouchers.

12                       COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI:  Redlining,  
13          do you find with Bread for the City that residents  
14          who are in a position to take their voucher to use  
15          as a down payment for housing?  Have Bread for the  
16          City been keeping a trend on any redlining  
17          practices?  Is that existing in the District --

18                       MS. LINDHURST:  Do you mean for home  
19          purchase?

20                       COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI:  Yes, as it  
21          --

22                       MS. LINDHURST:  We haven't really

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1 worked with any home purchase. I did a few a decade  
2 ago. But I haven't helped any voucher holders  
3 purchase --

4 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So your  
5 concentration really has been mostly with public  
6 housing. You've been helping a lot with relocation  
7 and some of our issues with using vouchers with  
8 our slum landlords.

9 Now, let me ask you another question,  
10 whether or not Bread for the City have a list of  
11 slum landlords. At one point in time, the  
12 Washington Post, if you recall, used to place and  
13 let us know all the slum landlords. That is no  
14 longer a feature, whether, it's not even in social  
15 media with them.

16 So my question would be whether or not  
17 Bread for the City is keeping a trend of slum  
18 landlords in all eight wards of the District of  
19 Columbia.

20 MS. LINDHURST: We certainly have  
21 repeat landlords that we struggle with. I think  
22 more importantly the attorney general has been

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1 prosecuting landlords that are not doing the right  
2 thing by their residents. And so I think the target  
3 has been to sue landlords who aren't maintaining  
4 their properties.

5 You know, the names I'm not going to  
6 say here, but are certainly in the newspaper on  
7 a regular basis. We know those names. We don't  
8 maintain a particular list. I think it's just  
9 familiarity with, oh that guy, he rents to voucher  
10 holders because he can, you know, he seems like  
11 he can get away with not taking care of their  
12 properties.

13 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Rebecca, thank you  
14 so much.

15 MS. LINDHURST: Thank you.

16 MR. GARRETT: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Nathaniel Aquino?  
18 Welcome.

19 MR. AQUINO: Thank you very much.  
20 Good afternoon. My name is Nathaniel Aquino. And  
21 I'm an attorney with AARP's Legal Counsel for the  
22 Elderly. We are a non-profit organization whose

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1 goals are to protect, defend, and empower  
2 low-income residents 60 years and older.

3 First, I would like to thank the Board  
4 of Commissioners for the opportunity to testify  
5 today.

6 At the outset, what I would like to make  
7 clear, and I think a lot of the testimony that we've  
8 already heard today has touched on this, is that  
9 no tenant who has to live in substandard housing  
10 conditions wishes to do so for any longer than they  
11 have to.

12 For years, tenants and tenant advocates  
13 have raised issues that Resolution 19-01 seem to  
14 address, which is that DCHA's housing stock is  
15 falling apart. For years, Legal Counsel for the  
16 Elderly and other advocates have testified before  
17 the D.C. council about the worsening conditions  
18 in public housing units.

19 And for just as many years, DCHA has  
20 deferred making repairs, giving various reasons  
21 for its inability to do so. Again, public housing  
22 tenants want and deserve safe, sanitary, and

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1       habitable housing just as this Board does.

2               But I'm testifying today to make two  
3 points.     First, this resolution purports to  
4 drastically alter the very nature of the public  
5 housing program through the transfer of ownership  
6 and the subsidy conversion.     Doing so would  
7 diminish vital tenant rights beyond repair.

8               Second, by hastily rushing through this  
9 process without providing any information to the  
10 public or seeking the input from tenants or their  
11 advocates, this proposal sends a chilling message,  
12 whether intended or not, that DCHA is making  
13 decisions without key stakeholders' input, or  
14 excuse me, key stakeholder input from tenants most  
15 affected by these changes.

16              This is particularly disappointing  
17 given a long-term spirit of collaboration between  
18 the Housing Authority and organizations such as  
19 Legal Counsel for the Elderly.

20              Now, we did note that there is a vague  
21 reference in one of the exhibits to making every  
22 attempt allowable under the law to not diminish

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1 tenants' rights. However, by its very nature, the  
2 inclusion of such a caveat acknowledges the fact  
3 that invaluable rights may be lost.

4 For instance, what transfer rights will  
5 tenants have in these new units? As we know,  
6 relocation of 160-plus Arthur Capper residents took  
7 over 3 months to accomplish and that cooperation,  
8 and it took the cooperation of numerous agencies  
9 and organizations.

10 Additionally, due process rights will  
11 be impacted, due process rights such as the right  
12 to review one's file, the requirements that all  
13 public housing leases require good cause as  
14 standard for eviction, the right to a written notice  
15 of termination stating with specificity any reason  
16 for termination so as to allow the tenant an  
17 opportunity to prepare her defense, the right to  
18 an informal conference with public housing  
19 officials in most cases, and the right to a formal  
20 grievance hearing before an impartial decision  
21 maker in most instances.

22 This is just a quick sampling, but it's

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1 clear that transferring ownership to private  
2 entities or subsidy, or changing a subsidy type  
3 irreparably strips public housing tenants of their  
4 essential rights.

5 In light of what is at stake, it is  
6 critical that DCHA not forge ahead with this  
7 proposal without first providing information to  
8 the public and seeking input from those most  
9 directly impacted. It is essential that DCHA  
10 provide data and comparative analyses as to other  
11 competing options.

12 We, therefore, implore this Board to  
13 table this proposal that strips public housing  
14 tenants of their most essential rights, instead,  
15 give DCHA staff, stakeholders, city council,  
16 tenants, tenant advocates time to sit down and truly  
17 analyze what is best for the future of public  
18 housing in the District of Columbia.

19 My colleagues and I at Legal Counsel  
20 for the Elderly will be happy to answer any  
21 questions either myself today or by follow-up email  
22 that you might have going forward. And I

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1 appreciate your time. Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.

3 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Question.

4 MR. AQUINO: Yes, ma'am.

5 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: My  
6 question is you read the resolution, correct?

7 MR. AQUINO: Did my best,  
8 Commissioner, but I echo what Ms. Lori Leibowitz  
9 said earlier, which was it changed a little bit  
10 this morning. And we also didn't get a copy of  
11 it until just a couple of days ago. So we're doing  
12 our best to scramble to be able to address what  
13 was in there.

14 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So have you  
15 ever been to an advocate meeting with the director?

16 MR. AQUINO: I go to every single one.

17 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So, when  
18 you met with the director, did he or did he not  
19 say that he -- now, I'm going to be honest with  
20 you. MR. AQUINO: Yes, ma'am.

21 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: To me, none  
22 of you all are stakeholders. The only stakeholders

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1 I know is residents.

2 So, when it comes to your organization,  
3 do you have a class for the elderly who attends  
4 your meetings and you share with them if you know  
5 that they live in public housing or let's say you  
6 know they live in a housing choice voucher program?

7 So do you have workshops with them so  
8 that they can comprehend and understand with  
9 clarification and understanding and transparency  
10 what is going on in their particular housing market  
11 and you assign them a AARP lawyer to talk to them  
12 separately if there's a misunderstanding, because  
13 if you're not doing it, I challenge you to do it?

14 And you will become a partner of the District of  
15 Columbia Housing Authority by helping us educate.

16 Everybody come in front of us and always  
17 telling us how we're supposed to educate. Now,  
18 we already got you on -- first, we weren't even  
19 computer literate here. So now it took a Board  
20 of Commissioners, some of the Commissioners to  
21 fight so you could be on Facebook, so you could  
22 be on Twitter, so you can be on social media, so

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1 that you can hear what we are hearing. Okay? So  
2 that ain't working.

3 Okay. So now you mailed everybody  
4 letters in the mail. That ain't working because  
5 the mail don't always work either. Okay.

6 Could you give me -- seriously, do you  
7 think that AARP could start a TV show? And on that  
8 TV show it only going to talk about how you read  
9 a resolution, tools, how to read a resolution, how  
10 you read it when it impacts you, because I'm going  
11 to be honest, first, it got to impact my community  
12 first before I could deal with yours. If I haven't  
13 cleaned up my community and advocate for it, how  
14 can I advocate for yours?

15 So I'm saying that girl with the Legal  
16 Aid, if all of you all could find a way to join  
17 partnership with us with communication so when your  
18 clients come to you, because you have that  
19 one-on-one time with them, maybe you could extend  
20 a more 10, 15 more minutes. And then you have them  
21 sign a note or something, because, see, we don't  
22 do that.

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1           See, if a resident, if they have a  
2 meeting here, you have the right to sign in or  
3 sign-in sheets are voluntary. It's not a mandatory  
4 situation. So, if this room was filled up with  
5 15 residents and they decide not to sign that  
6 sign-in sheet, you would never know 15 people was  
7 here unless they do a release with a press release.

8           So, if you all can all get together in  
9 the next two years before the two years is over  
10 with, figure out a way how you can help us to  
11 communicate and get our message across so that all  
12 the stakeholders, that's first the residents and  
13 then you all, because all of you all already know,  
14 because most of you all are lawyers, developers,  
15 et cetera, whatever.

16           So, when you all get together, you all  
17 don't do a lot of venting. You all come to the  
18 table with a course of action and an agenda. You  
19 know the purpose and the mission. There's no  
20 screaming and hollering, because you already done  
21 -- see, you respect each other enough to learn the  
22 history of the community. And then you, okay,

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1 teach us those same skills as residents so we can  
2 be as successful as you. Thank you so much.

3 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you,  
4 Commissioner.

5 MR. AQUINO: Madam Commissioner, I  
6 appreciate the question and the comments. I think  
7 one thing my colleagues and I are always trying  
8 to do is to try to figure out different ways to  
9 touch different people.

10 I do my best to try to talk to as many  
11 resident councils and tenant associations that I  
12 can, because you're absolutely right. These are  
13 rights. And it's an education that needs to  
14 happen. And it starts sometimes from the ground  
15 up and to be proactive about it rather than being  
16 reactionary, which is often what we're, what we  
17 end up doing.

18 And I think we'd welcome the  
19 opportunity to get into more of these buildings  
20 and to talk to more tenant advocacy organizations,  
21 but also tenants themselves face to face.

22 I can't, I just want to say I can't speak

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1 for the AARP itself, because we are a subsidiary  
2 thereof under the larger umbrella. But I can speak  
3 for Legal Counsel for the Elderly in that we echo  
4 your sentiments and that education is absolutely  
5 essential for all tenants and all public housing  
6 residents.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.

8 MR. AQUINO: Thank you all for your  
9 time.

10 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Courtney Alexander?  
11 Welcome, Courtney.

12 MS. ALEXANDER: Hi. Thank you for the  
13 opportunity. I'm Courtney Alexander. I'm with  
14 the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights  
15 and Urban Affairs. The committee was founded in  
16 1968 for the purposes of addressing civil rights  
17 violations, racial injustice, and poverty related  
18 issues in Washington D.C., including racial  
19 inequity and other barriers to fair housing.

20 I will say that I echo the sentiments  
21 of my colleagues who have testified today. The  
22 committee is deeply concerned about the approach

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1 to redevelopment outlined in the resolution. And  
2 we are concerned that it will not accomplish the  
3 stated goal of this Commission or of this Board,  
4 which is to maximize the availability of safe and  
5 affordable housing units in the District of  
6 Columbia.

7 The plan as currently outlined in the  
8 version of the resolution that we actually received  
9 yesterday will result in the loss of deeply  
10 affordable housing units in the District. And this  
11 will be especially catastrophic for families in  
12 need of larger units such as four and five-bedroom  
13 units.

14 Additionally, perhaps what's most  
15 disturbing about the version of the resolution that  
16 we received is what's missing from this document.

17 And in the spirit of transparency that Director  
18 Garrett mentioned, what we ask today is that  
19 pertinent information actually be released to the  
20 public, first and foremost the residents, but also  
21 the stakeholders and the legal services community  
22 that is represented here today.

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1           And that information we're asking for  
2           is all of the data, the reports, and other documents  
3           that were used to reach the decisions and the  
4           conclusions included in this resolution.

5           Additionally, the location of the units  
6           at issue was not in the version that we received,  
7           a detailed analysis of the cost to repair the units  
8           instead of potentially demolishing those units in  
9           relation to the disposition that is contemplated  
10          in the resolution.

11          We also ask that the Board assemble a  
12          working group that includes a cross section of  
13          stakeholders, including but not limited to legal  
14          services organizations, many of which are  
15          represented here today, more importantly the  
16          residents, as well as other fair housing advocates.

17          We also ask that this Board postpone  
18          the vote on the resolution until such time that  
19          that working group has had an opportunity to review  
20          the information that we're asking to be released  
21          today.

22          We also ask that you consider during

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1 that interim period reviewing the full written  
2 testimony of the Washington Lawyers' Committee.

3 And finally, we will say that many  
4 public housing units, yes, they are in need of  
5 extensive repairs. But this is not a new or an  
6 unexpected issue. In fact, many of the residents  
7 that have come to this Board and the advocates in  
8 the room have pleaded with DCHA to fix those issues  
9 for decades. And residents have lived with those  
10 issues for decades.

11 The Commission, the Commissioners, the  
12 District of Columbia, DCHA, the advocates all owe  
13 it to those residents to stop and take time to fully  
14 and thoughtfully come up with a solution for these  
15 problems that doesn't inflict further harm on those  
16 residents. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much.

18 Can I ask a question? Go ahead, Commissioner.

19 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: No, I --

20 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So you talk a little  
21 bit about assembling a working group. Could you  
22 sort of give, no pun intended, a framework of what

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1 that group could look like and what it would do?

2 MS. ALEXANDER: I think the primary  
3 goal of that working group would be to analyze that  
4 data that I mentioned to see fully what DCHA has  
5 been able to see. I think there was some talk about  
6 seeing some of the lead report or some of these  
7 other reports. But it is important to make  
8 decisions with all available information.

9 So the first thing would be to have that  
10 working group see what DCHA has been able to see,  
11 and more importantly, to have all of these people  
12 who are going to be affected, so residents, but  
13 also the people with that legal knowledge of what  
14 their rights are, what the law mandates and allows,  
15 to have all of those people at the same table looking  
16 at the same information and maybe coming up with  
17 creative alternatives.

18 I agree. This is a massive problem,  
19 and it's been going on for decades. No one  
20 disagrees with that. And no one envies being kind  
21 of the face of that problem.

22 But I think that with those people, the

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1 right people at that table we can come up with  
2 creative solutions that both target the issue, fix  
3 the issue, but also don't inflict additional harm.

4 So, as far as what people would be in  
5 or what organizations would be in that working  
6 group, I think it has to include residents,  
7 obviously, because these are the people who have  
8 to live in these communities.

9 But it should also include some of the  
10 people that you heard from today who work with them  
11 day in and day out, who get the phone calls about  
12 the landlords who don't take vouchers when we all  
13 know that's illegal. So I think those people also  
14 have to be a part of that conversation. And they  
15 have to have all of the available information.

16 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Appreciate it --

17 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I'm going  
18 to go a little further. I agree with you. But  
19 that working group, I'm going to craft it.

20 As a public housing resident, what I  
21 find is when you put -- okay, let's say hypothetical  
22 that you just want to -- it's Park Morton. But

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1 when you have Lincoln Heights, Richardson  
2 Dwellings, and Park Morton together it's going to  
3 be chaos, because we all -- see, everybody look  
4 at us as a group. We're not a group.

5 MS. ALEXANDER: Absolutely.

6 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: We're  
7 territorial, whether we want to admit it or not.  
8 And we come together on common grounds. We are  
9 public and Indian housing.

10 So, therefore, I think the group is more  
11 effective, if it's Park Morton you're dealing with,  
12 the only people that need to be there are Park Morton  
13 residents and Park Morton executive board. And  
14 you don't need no outsiders.

15 And each community that you travel  
16 through you need to talk to us, because this is  
17 what happens. If you find somebody who have a mouth  
18 like mine and they're from another community,  
19 they're going to outtalk the person that's from  
20 Park Morton. They've done used up all the time.  
21 You see what I'm saying?

22 And I find that -- and here's a term

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1 that I have created. In the fabric is the land.

2 So urban is the District of Columbia, because we  
3 are urban municipal corporation. So, when you look  
4 at the urban design of the fabric, the fabric is  
5 us. We're the biggest thing going.

6 And the residents in the District of  
7 Columbia have not been taught, not been educated.

8 Now, I'm only talking about a targeted group.  
9 So, when they come to the table, instead of us  
10 speaking with a calm voice, we are so angry because  
11 we have never, ever, ever had the opportunity to  
12 vent.

13 And then when you're going to put us  
14 in working groups, you put us in working round  
15 tables where you have everyone who's a facilitator  
16 that's on the same page.

17 First, in order to have a conversation  
18 with us, there need to be a one-on-one called  
19 vocabulary and terminology course. If you can't  
20 take that course, you can't be a part of the group  
21 no more, because what you find is you have one group  
22 of people in there. They understand the

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1 terminology. They understand the vocabulary.  
2 And they did these case studies, so whatever you  
3 told me to do.

4 Now, you put somebody else in there.

5 I don't want to hear about something 50 years ago.

6 We're talking about right now and right then.

7 And if you can't -- and that will go for me, too.

8 And this will be hard for me to obey the ground  
9 rules.

10 But the ground rules, that is the only  
11 way that we will work ourselves out of what we're  
12 doing in the District of Columbia, because, number  
13 one, we have to organize residents first by  
14 terminology. Can you help me with that?

15 MS. ALEXANDER: Actually, that's the  
16 whole reason I'm at the Washington Lawyers'  
17 Committee is to get closer to the community to  
18 actually have those one-on-one conversations with  
19 residents, tenant councils, all of those people.

20 I --

21 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Okay.

22 Take down my number and text me.

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1 MS. ALEXANDER: Yes, ma'am.

2 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI:  
3 202-627-9160. We have the target date. This is  
4 January. We're going to meet in February. And  
5 we're going to do it. We'll have -- February is  
6 a short month. So, with your brains and my brains,  
7 this should work real quick.

8 And in March, you should be ready to  
9 do what you need to do with your first group, because  
10 if we don't target people right, DCHA will give  
11 you the language. They will use their own papers,  
12 because they already know the HUD vocabulary, our  
13 vocabulary, because that's one of the problems we  
14 have.

15 Residents sit there. We're talking  
16 about something federal, and you give them a local  
17 dialogue. Now, you're upset because the Board of  
18 Commissioners vote yes, because we understood it  
19 was federal. And now, you didn't understand that.

20 And so, as we go in finishing out 2019, by 2020  
21 we should be there. Okay?

22 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Courtney, I think

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1 our executive director has some questions for you.

2 MR. GARRETT: I truly appreciate your  
3 comments, Ms. Alexander. One thing I do want to  
4 point out is that everyone who has spoken, and we've  
5 discussed this many times, has talked about decades  
6 of the same systemic problems happening within the  
7 Authority and across our portfolio.

8 I've been here 15 months and over that  
9 15-month period directed the staff and the team  
10 to create an environmental task force to go into  
11 every single unit throughout our portfolio to  
12 identify exactly what our actual problems are so  
13 we would know how to address them. And that was  
14 the purpose of what we're trying to do.

15 Our risk assessment that we have  
16 performed, getting through that was important,  
17 because we want the health and safety of our  
18 families at the forefront of what we're trying to  
19 do, in addition to our legal obligation.

20 We have no intention of displacing  
21 again or treading on anyone's legal rights or  
22 opportunities within our portfolio. Our

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1 residents, they're our stakeholders. Those are  
2 the people that we're serving, and that's part of  
3 our mission.

4 What I also want to say is that what  
5 we're trying to do now, this aggressive approach  
6 is based on a few things. It's based on the fact  
7 that we do have an infrastructure that has a  
8 timeframe on it where we have to make some  
9 improvements within the next 12 months, in some  
10 cases, in the shorter period, shorter timeframe  
11 than 12 months based on the time we began our lead  
12 risk assessments.

13 And those are things that we have been  
14 discussing throughout our conversations with not  
15 only the Board, but with the residents themselves  
16 at each community that we have gone out to for those  
17 risk assessments that we perform where there have  
18 been other conversations and dialogue between the  
19 administration and the residents. So our  
20 residents directly know what we're doing and know  
21 what we're facing.

22 In addition, this resolution is a

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1 format, is a process in which we would undertake.

2 We have not identified any units for repositioning  
3 or redevelopment from this resolution.

4 We have created a framework and a  
5 process for which we will bring it back to the Board  
6 with all that information. And in doing so, we  
7 would have engaged the residents directly so that  
8 they have a clear understanding of what's going  
9 on.

10 And in closing, we've known, and I've  
11 looked at documents, and I've looked at transcripts  
12 where \$1.3 billion in needs, it's grown to that  
13 over the course of time. So this isn't something  
14 new that has just sprung up. I think what it is  
15 for many people is the first time that we're  
16 aggressively saying we need to stop and make a  
17 change.

18 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you. Thank  
19 you, Courtney. Thanks for your time. Daniel,  
20 you're up. Welcome.

21 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Good afternoon,  
22 Commissioners.

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1 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Good afternoon.

2 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Quick question  
3 before I start, what's up with Commissioner Kenner?

4 He hasn't been here in a minute. We haven't seen  
5 him in a while. Is he still part of the Board?

6 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: He is still part of  
7 the Board, yes.

8 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Oh, okay. Are there  
9 any regulations as to how many meetings they can  
10 miss?

11 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: You can talk with the  
12 Office of General Counsel --

13 MR. DEL PIELAGO: I just haven't seen  
14 him in a good while. So, and I know he's very  
15 involved in all of this, so just asking.

16 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great. Thank you.

17 MR. DEL PIELAGO: Okay. I'm Daniel  
18 del Pielago with Empower DC. I just want to echo  
19 the sentiments of my colleagues in the legal  
20 community.

21 This is, to me, this is validation that  
22 we've been doing some good work, because we have

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1       been urging the Housing Authority to ask for local  
2       money. And I think that's a very good thing. We  
3       need local investment from our government, our  
4       local government, to save and improve public  
5       housing as we know it. We do not want to see  
6       continued loss of public housing.

7               While Director Garrett says that we're  
8       not trying to displace anyone, we have displaced  
9       a lot of people. That has been the, what's resulted  
10      from all of these developments we've seen, Cappers,  
11      Barry Farm. We'll most likely see that with Park  
12      Morton.

13             So, while there is some new energy in  
14      getting a baseline of what the problems are, the  
15      solutions that we see laid out here are old,  
16      demolition, partnering with private developers.  
17      They've all resulted in public housing residents  
18      being spread around the city and historic  
19      communities being lost.

20             So I just want to urge you all to  
21      consider that, Board, that we really do need  
22      something new. I do appreciate the director saying

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1 that we're going to look at different things. But  
2 that's not -- you know, we've been talking about  
3 this. This came up on the advocate community, the  
4 legal community, the organizing community really  
5 fast. So we've been talking about this. And maybe  
6 we need to look at it a little bit more. But we're  
7 not seeing any new solutions to it.

8 You know, people at Barry Farm are in  
9 the wind. They're not in their community anymore.  
10 They're in another ward. They're in other  
11 communities.

12 So, while we do agree -- I agree. I  
13 don't want anybody to be living in bad conditions.

14 I don't want anybody -- you know, we've been to  
15 the properties where people who have literally  
16 fallen in through the ground of their home. We  
17 don't want to see that. We want to see improvement.

18 But the theory of change or the actual  
19 processes of change that we see and hear are nothing  
20 new. And they've all led to, as I will continue  
21 to say, to the loss of public housing, the loss  
22 of historic communities.

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1           Barry Farm is trying to do something  
2 different. We're working on trying to -- you know,  
3 what do residents really want and how can we support  
4 residents in coming up with their own plan to do  
5 what they want so we can have ownership  
6 opportunities, as Commissioner Aquarius says.

7           So I would urge no votes on this until  
8 we have a real discussion on new ways of improving  
9 and saving public housing. Thank you.

10           CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you, Daniel.

11           MR. GARRETT: Commissioners, and thank  
12 you. I appreciate your comments. But we talk  
13 about new ways when we were, earlier this morning.  
14 The new ways are still very limited.

15           And what I mean by that, in terms of  
16 public dollars coming into the Housing Authority,  
17 I don't think there's any housing authority  
18 throughout the nation that could make that type  
19 of request of their city government, county  
20 government, or even state for that matter, to the  
21 magnitude that we need funding. We just don't have  
22 that capacity.

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1           And I don't think the District --  
2           they've been very helpful, because we utilize the  
3           repair and maintenance fund on an annual basis.  
4           We apply for that. That money is given to us based  
5           on the equation that the District uses. And we  
6           utilize and put that money to good use. But it's  
7           still not enough.

8           And even increasing that, as I said,  
9           our need for, within the next year is \$343 million  
10          to actually stabilize for just within the next  
11          fiscal year.

12          So what we're trying to do, we're trying  
13          to look at all of our options and put them together,  
14          whether it be money coming, more money coming from  
15          the District, if at all possible, and a combination  
16          of other resources that we might be able to put  
17          together, in addition to some of these other options  
18          that we're going to bring back to, not only to the  
19          public, but to the advocates, but also to the Board  
20          of Commissioners before any final decisions are  
21          made.

22          What we're talking about, again, from

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1 this resolution is just the first stage to say this  
2 is the framework of how we're going to review and  
3 look at this.

4 We've already uncovered everything.  
5 We know what we're facing. Now, this is the process  
6 and how we're going to address the next decision  
7 that we have to make, whether or not we're going  
8 to put units into a rehabilitation status of some  
9 sort, whether it be public money being used or  
10 private equity coming in.

11 But this is just another step through  
12 that particular process. And I would hope that  
13 and encourage everyone to understand that this  
14 administration, that's what we're moving towards.

15 And we have to move at warp speed  
16 because there is some parameters by HUD that have  
17 incentives attached to it where we could obviously  
18 garner some more funding or additional funding to  
19 help that capital improvement or that capital need  
20 that we have for many of our units throughout our  
21 portfolio.

22 MR. DEL PIELAGO: I appreciate it.

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1 All I would respond is let's make sure we're not  
2 losing more public housing and we're not displacing  
3 residents out of their historic communities.

4 MR. GARRETT: I totally agree with you.

5 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much,  
6 Daniel. Amber Harding? Welcome.

7 MS. HARDING: Thank you. Good  
8 afternoon. I'm Amber Harding. I'm an attorney  
9 at the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless.

10 We agree that public housing is in a  
11 serious state of disrepair. I don't need to tell  
12 you how many public housing residents have  
13 testified before this very commission and down at  
14 the D.C. council about the terrible conditions that  
15 they experience in public housing. This is not  
16 a new problem.

17 In fact, we were the lawyers who brought  
18 a class action against this agency in 1992 that  
19 put it into receivership over its failure to  
20 maintain its housing stock. That receivership  
21 lasted until 2000.

22 We also agree the federal government

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1 has failed to adequately invest in public housing  
2 infrastructure. We were there when that  
3 disinvestment began. And we partnered with this  
4 agency to fill the holes in its operating budget  
5 with local dollars for public safety at least a  
6 dozen years ago.

7 When community organizers like Empower  
8 DC began to raise the alarms about significant  
9 repairs needed in public housing, the Fair Budget  
10 Coalition advocated for local investments in  
11 repairs to public housing.

12 We might have been more successful in  
13 that advocacy if DCHA had been as transparent about  
14 the crisis as it is being today. Instead, DCHA  
15 leadership often claimed it could make do with much  
16 less. And even when it received local money, they  
17 had to be heavily pressured to use it for the health  
18 and safety risks that were there.

19 Now DCHA says it needs \$343 million this  
20 year to temporarily relocate residents and make  
21 needed repairs to 6,695 public housing units.  
22 That's 84 percent of the public housing stock.

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1 84 percent is in urgent need of repair.

2 That's not a problem that develops in  
3 a month, a year, or even five years. That's gross  
4 negligence on a massive, unprecedented scale.

5 Nevertheless, here we are. After  
6 decades of mismanagement, negligence, and ignoring  
7 the pleas of public housing residents, the question  
8 comes down to what can be done.

9 Unfortunately, we're at an emergency  
10 meeting with very little opportunity to engage the  
11 community. And you, Commissioners, are being  
12 presented with a false choice between leaving  
13 thousands of public housing residents in  
14 dangerously deplorable conditions and eradicating  
15 a large portion of D.C.'s public housing stock and  
16 displacing thousands of households.

17 And to the director's point that this  
18 is just the first stage, I want to point out that  
19 this first stage very clearly forecloses the option  
20 we're asking you to consider.

21 If you look at paragraph 2 of your  
22 resolution, it asks you to affirm that the most

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1 effective available tools for addressing immediate  
2 conditions and ensuring long-term financial and  
3 physical viability would involve shifting  
4 properties from traditional public housing subsidy  
5 to a voucher system.

6 That's what you're being asked to  
7 decide. And that's why all of us are here asking  
8 you to consider a different option.

9 You've a better, more obvious choice.  
10 Ask the mayor and the council for the funds you  
11 need to make these repairs. We'll support you in  
12 that ask.

13 While the amount seems large, it's not  
14 unprecedented for D.C. to invest that kind of money  
15 into infrastructure and capital improvements.

16 Just last year D.C. chose to increase  
17 the sales tax and raise \$178.5 million a year to  
18 improve Metro infrastructure. D.C. has also  
19 invested \$3 billion to modernize and renovate our  
20 schools. Public housing is just as critical of  
21 an infrastructure investment as schools and  
22 transportation.

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1 D.C. has the money to do this. In 2017,  
2 D.C. had a surplus of \$287 million. That's extra  
3 money it dropped into the bank and didn't spend.

4 We don't yet know the numbers from 2018.

5 But D.C. is likely to have enough to get DCHA most  
6 of what it needs towards the FY19 expenditures it's  
7 asking for.

8 It's important that when developing its  
9 options resolving this crisis the D.C. Housing  
10 Authority consider the important and distinct role  
11 that public housing plays in its housing ecosystem.

12 Many public housing households could  
13 not secure units in the private market that meets  
14 their needs, whether it's because there are too  
15 few large family units, too few wheelchair  
16 accessible units, or too few landlords that accept  
17 applicants with poor credits.

18 If 2,500 public housing households are  
19 forced to use a voucher instead, how many of those  
20 households will have to leave D.C. to secure  
21 housing?

22 We do not support leaving people in

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1 uninhabitable apartments or homes where their  
2 health is at risk. But we also do not support what  
3 feels like the death knell for public housing,  
4 converting thousands of units to vouchers or  
5 redeveloping those properties into places our  
6 clients will never be able to return to.

7 We urge you to require DCHA to develop  
8 an option for fully funding the repairs and  
9 renovations of all the units without losing any  
10 public housing stock and to ensure that there is  
11 a meaningful input process for public housing  
12 residents about the futures of their homes.

13 We look forward to working with the  
14 agency to develop such a plan and to advocate for  
15 its funding. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Okay. Thank you so  
17 much, Amber.

18 MR. GARRETT: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Any questions for  
20 Amber?

21 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I have a  
22 question. Give me that figure again, 6,690. What

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1 did you say?

2 MS. HARDING: 6,695.

3 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Okay.

4 Now, let me ask you a question. So you feel that  
5 the Board should vote no for this resolution.

6 MS. HARDING: I believe that the Board  
7 should either vote no or modify the resolution to  
8 include that the Housing Authority needs to come  
9 up with an option for repairing those 6,695 units.

10 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: So do you  
11 see this resolution as a framework for  
12 stabilization and repositioning?

13 MS. HARDING: I see it as a very limited  
14 and narrow framework that excludes the most obvious  
15 choice for how you would repair those units.

16 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: And if you  
17 was in our position, how would you prepare the units  
18 that now -- now, we have to keep in mind that  
19 Director Garrett has only been here for 15 months.

20 I've lived through the receivership as we know.

21 And I disagreed with the receivership,  
22 because the District of Columbia vacancy rate was

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1 made by Congress and DPAR from the beginning. And  
2 I always felt that the receivership was an attack  
3 on Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly, and at which time the  
4 District of Columbia didn't ask to be under  
5 receivership. And we did have a city. And if you  
6 know how our fundings are through Congress and then  
7 the other funding is through the mayor.

8 And I'm going to be quite frank with  
9 you. As a resident of the District of Columbia  
10 Housing Authority, I like the independency from,  
11 being an independent agency from the mayor. And  
12 I know what it was to live under a mayor. So I  
13 know the difference.

14 Now, I don't -- when we look at the  
15 District of Columbia government, and as we should  
16 know, when government plays a full part, because  
17 since I've been on this Board every time the city  
18 has helped us out, the city has control, the city  
19 calls the shot. I don't care. We put up the most  
20 money until the city had to use their new market  
21 tax credits. We do all that, but we're behind the  
22 ball.

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1           So now, what should we really do? Now,  
2 you can't have it both ways, because life is not  
3 like that. And we're only talking about a  
4 municipal corporation, which is the District of  
5 Columbia.

6           We already know how many hosts that's  
7 already in Ward 6. We already know how many RAB,  
8 new preserved workable houses that we have and ever  
9 have, which is the only way that we're right now  
10 under Obama administration came up with RAB.  
11 Before there was RAB there was this, there was that,  
12 and that was the other.

13           So how do a housing advocacy group work  
14 out a formula or how do you save the rest of a housing  
15 stock that has all lived its life cycle? The only  
16 one who's free of the slave master is Langston,  
17 because it's historic preserve.

18           I don't understand why the legal  
19 community is not trying to get Kelly Miller to  
20 reserve, because Kelly Miller public housing have  
21 the same history, so that we can be moving that  
22 away one way with one group of housing while we're

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1 dealing with what we have here, because now what  
2 I'm seeing is I'm still saying I don't see how we  
3 can have it both ways.

4 I can't have 50,000 residents coming  
5 in front of me like they did at 203 Greenleaf.  
6 Now, you're going to tell me -- and I'm having phone  
7 calls all night about you got rats, you want your  
8 building torn down, et cetera, et al. And I've  
9 gone through there and seen how many residents are  
10 still there in the rats.

11 So now do I supposed to let the  
12 residents stay in the rat-infested building while  
13 this Board figures out what to do or do I seize  
14 the opportunity under this Trump administration  
15 and work with whatever they have so I can get these  
16 residents out, because I'm tired of hearing  
17 residents telling me -- and some of them may be  
18 sitting in this room because they did the same thing  
19 in Barry Farms, because that's how it came down,  
20 by residents coming up here talking about your bad  
21 condition of your house.

22 You already know the Housing Authority

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1 don't have no money. And you, yourself, how old  
2 is your car? If you have an antique car, you're  
3 going to keep that in the garage. And you're going  
4 to only drive that at special times. Then you're  
5 going to have to get a new car.

6 So what do we supposed to do, patch up  
7 the houses? And you all better make sure we don't  
8 get sued if we follow your instructions. Or what  
9 are we going to do when the next time one of my  
10 constituents tell me that a rat done bit their  
11 child, but I voted for them to stay there until  
12 we work it out? What am I to do?

13 MS. HARDING: So I --

14 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: I mean  
15 seriously tell me what to do.

16 MS. HARDING: I think these are really  
17 important considerations for the plan. And I  
18 actually want to highlight one of the things you  
19 said, which you should always be very conscious  
20 of whether any local money is going to come with  
21 strings attached, absolutely, 100 percent, right?

22 My experience is that when local

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1 government has given the Housing Authority money  
2 for public housing like for public safety it didn't  
3 come with strings attached. It was a recognition  
4 that the federal government had underfunded public  
5 housing. And it was understood that D.C. had an  
6 interest in supplementing that so that operations  
7 could be maintained.

8 But it is something that in the plan  
9 that I'm just asking to, this agency to create,  
10 there might be tradeoffs to every choice. But I  
11 don't think this Board can make an informed decision  
12 about the best choice without actually looking at  
13 what those, what the tradeoffs are to moving to  
14 a voucher supported system, what the tradeoffs are  
15 to getting public funds and having plans.

16 And I've seen a little bit of a plan  
17 from the Housing Authority that has estimated costs  
18 and breaks it down and includes a plan for temporary  
19 relocation for the residents while the repairs are  
20 happening.

21 And I do think that is the type of plan  
22 that we're looking to have fleshed out a little

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1 bit more and with some of those conversations with  
2 local decision makers about, you know, infusing  
3 some funds to improve the infrastructure.

4 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Go ahead.

5 MR. GARRETT: Okay. So thank you. I  
6 truly appreciate the opportunity to hear your  
7 concerns. And, Commissioners, I know we have  
8 discussed it and some things I might be repeating  
9 myself.

10 But I just want to just go back to the  
11 public ask, realizing and recognizing that our  
12 overall ask and need for viability -- and there's  
13 a distinction between viability and just immediate  
14 need. Viability is \$1.3 billion to increase life  
15 cycle for the units. And if we continue to delay  
16 that, that number increases over time from 1.3 to  
17 roughly we have said within the next 5 to 10 years  
18 somewhere between 1.7, if not higher.

19 Now, for one year, immediate fiscal  
20 year '19, just for patch work, not viability, not  
21 anything that would take us long term with the  
22 units, that's \$343 million.

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1 MS. HARDING: Right.

2 MR. GARRETT: If you are a good steward  
3 of funding and from our position as the  
4 administration, you have to look for other avenues  
5 so that we're not just doing patch work, but we're  
6 creating some type of sustainability within our  
7 portfolio for life expectancy for the next 15 to  
8 20 years.

9 And that's one of the pieces to this  
10 puzzle that we're going to be bringing to the Board,  
11 because again, what we're presenting today is a  
12 format for our process so that we can once again  
13 bring it back to the Board and explain how we've  
14 made decisions.

15 Some decisions may be made based on  
16 local funding coming to us. And the statement will  
17 be we don't have to seek any outside equity or any  
18 other opportunities because local funding can help  
19 support this particular initiative, this  
20 particular complex.

21 But there may be other cases where we'll  
22 have to present to not only the Board but also to

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1 the public and the residents themselves of reasons  
2 why a particular complex may be in need of something  
3 different.

4 So, again, all we're presenting at this  
5 point in time is just our format and process. Any  
6 final decision that has to be made on a complex  
7 or any units that go into a repositioning mode,  
8 that's going to be based on a clear dialogue and  
9 clear information given to the Board of  
10 Commissioners so that all their questions are  
11 answered and they feel comfortable and confident  
12 that the administration that they've entrusted to  
13 do their job on behalf of the residents and on behalf  
14 of the mission of the Housing Authority is doing  
15 just that.

16 MS. HARDING: So first I want to say  
17 that's not what your resolution says. It's really  
18 good to hear that. That's not what your resolution  
19 says. That's not what you're actually asking them  
20 to vote on. You're asking them to make a  
21 determination that the most effective available  
22 tool for addressing this problem is converting to

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1 a voucher system.

2 MR. GARRETT: And I --

3 MS. HARDING: Hold on.

4 MR. GARRETT: And I respectfully  
5 disagree with you. And the reason I do --

6 MS. HARDING: I mean, that's what the  
7 words say.

8 MR. GARRETT: Let me finish,  
9 Counselor. Your interpretation, that's your  
10 interpretation. But also, every effective tool  
11 doesn't necessarily apply to every single complex.

12 It will be different applications to each complex  
13 as we move through our analysis. So that doesn't  
14 mean one size fits all. That means we're going  
15 to evaluate each complex, each issue individually  
16 and make a determination.

17 For instance, we could bring back to  
18 this body within the next few months five different  
19 approaches to five different complexes, all  
20 different, some including public dollars and some  
21 maybe not including public dollars. That's how  
22 we're going to make our assessment.

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1           So each complex is going to be unique.

2           Each decision is going to be unique.

3           MS. HARDING:   And that is not what your  
4 resolution says.

5           MR. GARRETT:   Okay.

6           MS. HARDING:   So, hearing that, I think  
7 that it would be helpful to amend it to say one  
8 of the available tools, not the most effective tools  
9 are converting to a voucher system, because you're  
10 saying you're going to present something that has  
11 a variety of possibilities.

12           And I would also caution you again  
13 saying that \$1.3 billion is not feasible when I've  
14 given you what is \$156 million a year for Metro  
15 going to equal, when school modernization was \$3  
16 billion.

17           That's significantly less than school  
18 modernization.   And I'm sure there were people when  
19 they were looking at the crumbling public schools  
20 who said what are we going to do about this.   There  
21 are jurisdictions that turned to privatizing their  
22 public school system.

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1 I am saying that should not be the  
2 District of Columbia's choice. I am saying we have  
3 precedent for choosing to invest in our  
4 infrastructure and that we should make the policy  
5 statement and decision that public housing is one  
6 of the most critical parts of our city's  
7 infrastructure that we have.

8 MR. GARRETT: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you so much,  
10 Amber. This is a good note to hear from you,  
11 Director Garrett, about the resolution. And  
12 you've heard the -- you can go.

13 MS. HARDING: Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you. I've  
15 known Amber for a while. I don't want to put her  
16 on the spot.

17 But you've heard the concerns. And I'm  
18 not going to try and reframe them, but particularly,  
19 the concern about seeking or the encouragement,  
20 not a concern, about seeking public funding to help  
21 solve the problem. Amber outlined some tax  
22 solutions and used some good examples with Metro

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1 funding and with funding for our public school  
2 system.

3 And so I just want to make sure that,  
4 and I think you've said that to us in private and  
5 I want to make sure you say it publicly that we  
6 are not foreclosing on looking at public funding,  
7 whether it's public funding at the federal level,  
8 which we know is limited and non-existent, but  
9 public funding at the local level.

10 MR. GARRETT: And that's one thing I  
11 was going to bring up. No, we're not  
12 closed-minded. And we're looking at all our  
13 options, including public money locally and public  
14 money from the federal government from HUD.

15 But one thing I also want to talk about  
16 and just bring out, once again, is that, yes, there  
17 is declining funding from across the board for the  
18 public housing program. And it's decreased over  
19 time. And it will probably, based on the trend,  
20 continue to decrease.

21 So, again, now we're talking about not  
22 only doing infrastructure or stabilizing the

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1 portfolio through an influx of capital, but we're  
2 also having to figure out a way to offer actual  
3 daily operational subsidy to maintain those units  
4 even after any work was done.

5 If we were fortunate to have that type  
6 of capital come in, where is the additional  
7 operating subsidy going to come from?

8 What we do have are options and  
9 availability of tools that would increase our  
10 operating money, operating subsidy on an annual  
11 basis to a particular complex that would give us  
12 the opportunity to continue to operate it at its  
13 fullest capacity and give residents the quality  
14 of life, because if we do something similar to what  
15 we've done before, which is utilize public dollars,  
16 put it in, but don't have the operating subsidy  
17 to sustain it, we'll be back at square one within  
18 the next five years.

19 It's a cycle that we want to figure out  
20 a way to break. And the administration is working  
21 hard to do that.

22 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So let me ask a

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1 couple questions. And we'll see if Commissioners  
2 have questions. So let's just say, name a complex,  
3 just a term that you use.

4 MR. GARRETT: Just say A. Don't, no,  
5 just say A --

6 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Complex A?

7 MR. GARRETT: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: What I'm going to  
9 call Amber's favorite complex today. That you  
10 recognize, based on your assessment, that there  
11 is a need for tremendous rehabilitation. What's  
12 your process for vetting it with, one, the community  
13 and, two, with the Board of Commissioners?

14 MR. GARRETT: Okay. Depending upon  
15 which approach we would actually take, all of them  
16 would require public input, especially from the  
17 residents first and foremost.

18 We would go to the residents. There  
19 is a series of meetings that we would have to have  
20 with them, whether it be, even if it was just a  
21 rehabilitation application or if it was a  
22 demolition application or something that's a little

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1 more extreme such as a conversion, there is public  
2 input, resident input that has to be maintained.

3 Now, one thing that we would do which  
4 would probably be different is, and it will be  
5 different, is that we would have an enormous amount  
6 of meetings versus the requirement. HUD says you  
7 have to have two or three meetings. We would go  
8 well beyond that, because we want everyone to be  
9 on board. And we understand the significance of  
10 what we're trying to do. So there would be a lot  
11 of public input, also resident input primarily.

12 Then, moving to the Board of  
13 Commissioners, as we've outlined, this doesn't just  
14 happen in a vacuum. We have our development and  
15 mod meetings on a monthly basis. We might have  
16 to have special meetings in the process if we're  
17 trying to make some deadlines and timeline for  
18 updating our MTW plan or getting information back  
19 to HUD.

20 So there may be some requests from the  
21 administration that the Board meet somewhat more  
22 frequently so that we can get the proper information

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1 to you so there is an opportunity for dialogue,  
2 questions, and a lot of discussion.

3 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So let me ask a  
4 follow-up question. So why vote on this resolution  
5 today? Why not talk to every affected property  
6 over the next few months? What's the haste?

7 MR. GARRETT: Well, we do have the  
8 obligation that if we're going to move forward with  
9 any applications based on a process that we might  
10 choose or a procedure or a program through HUD such  
11 as RAD or Section 18, which is a demo/dispo  
12 approach, we have to have that in by June, the end  
13 of June, June 30th I believe. That's the date where  
14 we have to have those applications in.

15 So, if we were to choose a direction,  
16 we need to have those engagement meetings with  
17 residents. We need to be able to bring it back  
18 to the Board to have it vetted and have it into  
19 HUD no later than June 30th. That is the current  
20 date that is on the table for these applications.

21 In addition, because we are an MTW  
22 authority, we have the obligation to update our

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1 MTW, our Moving to Work plan, no later than I believe  
2 it is May 1st. So we would have to go through that  
3 particular process, get that information into HUD  
4 by May 1st stating that we were going to take some  
5 measure and take some approaches.

6 So time for us is really condensed.  
7 The staff will be working double time, if not triple  
8 time, in order to try and get as much information,  
9 fact finding, overlay, possible scenarios, whether  
10 they be economic or from an operational standpoint,  
11 financial approach and/or stabilization.

12 When I talk about stabilization, I'm  
13 talking about recapitalization, any capital  
14 programs that we'd have to implement, in addition  
15 to what other opportunities for economic growth  
16 would be there, opportunities on which we've talked  
17 about a little bit. Does that give us an  
18 opportunity to influx capital?

19 There's a lot of things that we're going  
20 to have to do in a short period of time based on  
21 deadlines that are set up by HUD.

22 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So, Lori, Amanda,

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1 Nathaniel, Courtney, Amber all said they represent  
2 a diverse constituency. They would love to have  
3 input in this process. What's the framework, since  
4 we're using that word often today, to facilitate  
5 that input while still moving quickly?

6 MR. GARRETT: Well, we talked about it  
7 in December when we had the advocates in the room,  
8 about some type of subcommittee or subgroup that  
9 would be able to meet and discuss some of the things  
10 that we're talking about.

11 I think it would be something similar  
12 to what we did when we first proposed RAD, when  
13 I first came on board and we were talking about  
14 RAD. And we talked about the different  
15 distinctions between the RAD program and the  
16 conventional public housing where we outlined and  
17 redlined documents to show the distinctions and  
18 differences. It probably would be something along  
19 those lines, but just meeting a little more  
20 frequently.

21 Now, again, Commissioners, I have to  
22 say, taking in information from individuals, we're

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1 not always going to agree. What you have in the  
2 house now with the agency are true, dedicated  
3 professionals that are going to make, attempt to  
4 make the best decision on behalf of the residents  
5 and on behalf of the agency overall.

6 So there probably would be times when  
7 there would be disagreement. But what you would  
8 get from the Housing Authority is the opportunity  
9 for us to listen, take in information, and use that  
10 information to better scope what we would bring  
11 back to your attention.

12 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great. Additional  
13 questions from Commissioners?

14 MR. GARRETT: Oh, and OGC would head  
15 up. I'm going to put it on Ken. OGC would head  
16 up the discussions with any advocate organizations.

17 We would just increase our frequency of meetings  
18 that we already have.

19 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great.

20 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: How does,  
21 how would this resolution have direct input on my  
22 constituents?

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1 MR. GARRETT: As of this time, we  
2 haven't identified, Commissioner Vann-Ghasri, any  
3 complexes or any units that we might want to  
4 reposition.

5 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Well,  
6 let's act like it's a hypothetical.

7 MR. GARRETT: Hypothetical in D.C.  
8 becomes gospel. And I'm worried about doing that.

9 But the reality is if we thought that  
10 it was a property that we wanted to go and look  
11 at, we would start engaging the residents. So we  
12 would know in short time, and you would hear  
13 definitely. We would engage the leadership of that  
14 complex, start discussing what the options are,  
15 what we're looking at, and why with a full  
16 explanation.

17 COMMISSIONER STRICKLAND: Director  
18 Garrett, you mentioned incentives with this HUD  
19 timeline. Can you talk more about those incentives  
20 and the reason why that timeline with, the end of  
21 June is so important?

22 MR. GARRETT: Well, one piece to the

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1 puzzle is that they would do expedited reviews of  
2 applications that we submit, meaning that it  
3 usually takes anywhere from 6 to 12, if not 24 months  
4 sometimes, to do a review of a demolition  
5 application. What HUD is saying now is that if  
6 we get our applications in, if that was a route  
7 we were to take for a particular complex, HUD would  
8 expedite their review for us to get us all the  
9 necessary approvals so that we could move forward.

10 Also, in addition to that, with the  
11 subsidy moving a program if possible if we did that  
12 to the Section 9, to the Section 8 program from  
13 Section 9 to Section 8, which would allow for  
14 additional subsidy to the units, it would be a  
15 conversion of, from ACC subsidy to what we consider  
16 a HAP subsidy, housing assistance payment subsidy,  
17 which is actually more money based on what we're  
18 paying now for the housing choice voucher program  
19 directly.

20 So, in a nutshell, doing it now while  
21 the iron is hot would give us the opportunity to  
22 probably receive more funding for a conversion if

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1 that's something that we chose to do. We would  
2 have more capital money.

3 And I think one analysis that we  
4 actually did was that for one of our complexes we  
5 looked at it and just doing a conversion, nothing  
6 more than just a conversion into a new funding  
7 subsidy program, would allow us to have a \$4  
8 million, \$4.4 million surplus.

9 And in my mind, you could take \$4.4  
10 million as a surplus on an annual basis and  
11 recapitalize that property without doing anything  
12 substantial, just the conversion.

13 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: One more  
14 question, do we really have a problem with -- I  
15 recommend changing the language as Ann has  
16 suggested to one of instead of the most effective.

17 Can that be --

18 MR. GARRETT: That's fine.

19 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Well, I  
20 think the record needs to reflect it and it needs  
21 to be moved in the right format so that we can be  
22 in compliance how to change that language,

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1 Counselor.

2 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Ms.  
3 Vann-Ghasri, will you accept it as a technical  
4 amendment that we will assert post the vote?

5 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Yeah, but if you  
6 could -- absolutely. But let's make sure we --

7 MR. GARRETT: We're clear on that.

8 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: -- clear on the  
9 language and I sign off on it.

10 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Great.

12 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Thank you.

13 MR. GARRETT: Or to clearly say that  
14 we will include options for public dollars if  
15 feasible.

16 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: Yes, we'll  
17 make both.

18 MR. GARRETT: Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: And how will  
20 this impact HCVP?

21 MR. GARRETT: It would not. It would  
22 not.

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1 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Go ahead.

2 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Let's put  
3 -- can we put on the record where do DCHA get the,  
4 where do DCHA get its vouchers from, and when we're  
5 dealing with RAD, where do those vouchers come from,  
6 and how many different type of vouchers does the  
7 District of Columbia uses through DCHA  
8 administering?

9 MR. GARRETT: I think we have the local  
10 rent supplement program locally for local tenant  
11 vouchers. But D.C. gets the majority of its  
12 vouchers, DCHA gets, receives the majority of its  
13 vouchers from the federal system, the housing  
14 choice voucher program.

15 In this particular case with RAD, we  
16 would be talking about tenant protection vouchers  
17 that would be coming into us, or if we did a  
18 conversion, there would be project based vouchers.

19 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: And would  
20 you give a definition for the record what is the  
21 difference between a tenant voucher and a project  
22 based voucher?

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1 MR. GARRETT: Okay. So the tenant  
2 based voucher and the project based voucher are  
3 similar. If we're just talking about the local  
4 rent supplement program, that's something  
5 different. That's just, that's through, funded  
6 by the District government.

7 A PBV would be funded by the federal  
8 government and it would require a HAP contract,  
9 the housing assistance payment contract attached  
10 to that particular property. And that's how the  
11 subsidy would flow into the project.

12 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you. Is there  
13 anything else you would like -- any other questions  
14 from any of the Commissioners?

15 COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: I do.

16 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: I just  
18 wanted to know if you could paint some of the  
19 national context for this issue. We have talked  
20 a lot about D.C. and know our own jurisdiction most  
21 intimately, but if you could talk a little bit about  
22 how is this issue surfacing around the country.

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1 MR. GARRETT: Many housing authorities  
2 across the country are starting to participate in  
3 RAD. Some got out of the gate pretty late. If  
4 you remember, they had to extend and increase the  
5 number of units that they were allowing in the  
6 program when it originally was formed by HUD because  
7 housing authorities saw it as an opportunity to  
8 recapitalize their properties.

9 I know that in San Diego years ago  
10 before this whole RAD program got started they did  
11 do a major conversion of all of their, of the  
12 majority of their portfolio to a PBV concept,  
13 housing choice voucher concept. I know San  
14 Francisco has just done and is in the process of  
15 doing a huge RAD conversion of a majority of their  
16 portfolio.

17 I also know that Philadelphia is doing  
18 a conversion of some type within -- the larger  
19 housing authorities are doing it. And those are  
20 the ones that you hear about more than anything  
21 else. But there are a lot of smaller agencies  
22 throughout the nation who have done RAD

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1 conversions.

2 An example of one that I worked on was  
3 Freeport, Illinois where they did a RAD conversion  
4 of their, of a senior building. It was an in-house  
5 rehabilitation of units without having to displace  
6 residents at all. But that was a way to  
7 recapitalize that particular property because the  
8 dollars that were coming in from the federal  
9 government were not enough to sustain it.

10 So housing authorities throughout the  
11 country are doing something. I think this number,  
12 I want to say over 100,000 units are being asked  
13 to be reviewed by housing authorities to reposition  
14 themselves for whatever reason that HUD has  
15 identified.

16 We're one of the agencies that has been  
17 asked to look at our portfolio also, which we were  
18 going to do anyway. And I just have to make that  
19 clear also.

20 Remember, we started our own  
21 environmental effort and initiative over 12, almost  
22 12 months ago. So this effort was going to come

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1 about whether or not we received an opportunity  
2 or incentives from HUD or not. We were going to  
3 be having this same discussion because we were  
4 proactive in our approach, trying to get out ahead  
5 of what we see as a no-win situation if we don't  
6 act.

7 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you.  
8 Commissioner, any questions from you, Commissioner  
9 Council? Great. So we've heard the public  
10 testimony and the questions that Commissioners have  
11 asked. We've been briefed on the resolution. At  
12 this time, I would entertain a motion to approve  
13 Resolution 19-01. Is there a motion to approve?

14 COMMISSIONER TALIAFERRO: Second the  
15 motion.

16 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: No, you  
17 have to go on record. I move that Resolution 19-01  
18 to adopt a framework for the stabilization and  
19 repositioning of DCHA portfolio of properties be  
20 moved and voted into the record.

21 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Is there a second?

22 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: As amended,

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1 right?

2 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: As amended, right.

3 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: As  
4 amended. Thank you, Commissioner.

5 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: So it's seconded.  
6 Can we have a roll call?

7 MS. MCNAIR: Thank you. Commissioner  
8 Neal Jones?

9 COMMISSIONER NEAL JONES: Yes.

10 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner St. Jean?

11 COMMISSIONER ST. JEAN: Yes.

12 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Strickland?

13 COMMISSIONER STRICKLAND: Yes.

14 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Taliaferro?

15 COMMISSIONER TALIAFERRO: Yes.

16 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner  
17 Vann-Ghasri.

18 COMMISSIONER VANN-GHASRI: Abstain.

19 MS. McNAIR: Commissioner Council?

20 COMMISSIONER COUNCIL: Yes.

21 MS. McNAIR: Chairman Albert?

22 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Yes.

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1 MS. McNAIR: You have six yes, one  
2 abstention. The resolution is approved as  
3 amended.

4 MR. GARRETT: Thank you,  
5 Commissioners.

6 CHAIRMAN ALBERT: Thank you very much.

7 So I really want to thank the public, I thank  
8 Commissioners also, for coming out today on short  
9 notice and really just shedding light on the  
10 important issues facing our residents in public  
11 housing.

12 I was pleased to hear everyone  
13 acknowledge that the conditions under which our  
14 public residents or public housing residents are  
15 living are just no longer acceptable. And that's  
16 what we are trying to change here at D.C. Housing  
17 Authority.

18 My commitment to you is to work with  
19 you in not just the advocacy community but with  
20 the residents to make sure as we look at property  
21 by property that we don't foreclose on any options  
22 for renovations.

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1           And so we will ensure that this, this  
2 Board will ensure that the staff at Housing  
3 Authority is keeping the dialogue going not just  
4 today but beyond today.

5           So thank you so much for coming to our  
6 meeting today. Our next Board meeting is on  
7 February 13th right here at the D.C. Housing  
8 Authority headquarters. And we are adjourned.  
9 Thank you.

10           (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
11 went off the record at 2:16 p.m.)

12