

FOR THE RECORD

**Public Housing Sub-Committee's
Public Hearing
Re: Oversight on NYCHA's Section 8 Vouchers
May 2, 2007**

Public Housing Resident Of the Lower East Side is a non-for-profit grassroots organization comprised of residents working together to ensure our rights and protect the economic and affordable housing opportunities on the Lower East Side.

We welcome this opportunity to testify before the Public Housing Sub-Committee and appreciate the leadership of Chair Rosie Mendez.

PHROLES has a growing trepidation for the role that NYCHA plays in providing and preserving the affordable housing opportunities in New York City. Specifically, we are concerned about the availability of Section 8 vouchers; opportunities when residents receive the vouchers and ways that the Housing Authority could improve the services and information provided to families with these vouchers.

The Availability

When NYCHA announced the reopening of the waiting list, we were very concerned about how the numbers of families that need homes were incomparable to the vouchers that were available. Over 400,000 families have applied for only 22,000 vouchers.

Last year, NYCHA presented aggressive proposals that would address their deficit of \$168 million but simultaneously decrease opportunities within the affordable housing stock for families waiting for Section 8 Vouchers. PHROLES' had two main concerns including (1) the Housing Authority's proposal to use Section 8 Vouchers to pay for their unfunded City and State developments and (2) changing their Tenant Selection Application Process-TSAP, which eliminated the priority of applicants that were (a) Involuntarily displaced due to 'Action of Housing Owner' and (b) homeless regardless if they were referred by the city or others. The Section 8 Vouchers that they proposed to use for the unfunded developments would be the same vouchers that thousands of families are waiting for and would have negative ramifications for the Section 8 Program both locally and nationally. Further, opportunities for obtaining affordable housing were decreased when NYCHA capriciously changed their TSAP process, which is blatant disregard for the homelessness in New York City. After the waiting list closes in May, homeless singles and families will not be able to apply for Section 8 unless referred by DHS.

When families receive the vouchers

We are also concerned that many of these families will not be able to use their vouchers because of discrimination. A recent study by ACORN shows that 90% of New York City landlords do not accept Section 8. Only 13% of apartments available on Craig's List, the New York Times listings or the Daily News will accept Section 8. In addition, they have discriminated against applicants with Lawful income, which includes Social Security, disability, pension payments, etc. Like NYCHA, private landlords make a higher precedence for working families unfortunately private landlords will not even take Section 8 families that have someone working. Therefore, we urge passage of Intro 61 which would ban discrimination based on source of income. We hope that you will press NYCHA and DHS to change this mean spirited policy.

In addition, we urge NYCHA to use its excess Section 8 administrative fees and Section 8 reserve funds to assist recipients with their apartment search. Section 8 used to pay for broker's fees and a holding fee to compensate landlords for the inspection and paperwork time frame. Section 8 eliminated this program during its budget crisis but has not re-instituted this once the budget crisis ended.

NYCHA plans to build housing on empty-property with HPD and HDC. As NYCHA starts to development affordable housing on empty-property that should work with HPD and HDC toward securing units for Section 8 recipients.

Likewise NYCHA could contract with community based organizations with proven track records of finding families housing. NYCHA could have links to not for profit housing developers to reserve some units for Section 8 recipients. NYCHA could develop links with HUD's affordable housing programs.

Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before the Public Housing Sub-Committee.

Respectfully Submitted:

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