

Speakers no. 36-47 BOS Budget Hearing April 12, 2023. Note that speakers in the mobile home parks section may not make the new time for testimony and will be heard when they arrive around 6 pm. Testimony block organized by Fairfax NAACP Housing Committee.

First speaker in each section should announce to topic of that section.

OVERVIEW

1. Mary Paden, chair of South County Task Force

Good evening Supervisors. I am Mary Paden, Chair of the South County Task Force, founded in 1975 to advocate for low-income people on Rte 1. We have organized a block of excellent speakers on behalf of the Fairfax NAACP housing committee in four areas of affordable housing. I will give you an overview.

Topic 1. Displacement: The county is building more affordable housing, but we fear it is losing housing out the back door as rents are increased and older garden apartments are scheduled for redevelopment displacing many tenants (who are not all covered by the new no-net-loss policy). Mobile home park communities along Rte 1 are being bought by out-of-state equity firms and one park located in a future BRT area is ripe for sale to a developer. These parks are longstanding communities of color.

OUR ASK: We reiterate the importance of new position in the Dept. of Housing and Community Development focused on mobile home parks. Now is the time to put up *a sizeable strike fund for Preservation of Affordable Homes*, both stick and manufactured. *We ask for about \$30M in a strike fund as well as the use of other financing.*

In its budget guidance, the Board promised \$60M in the FY24 budget for both building and preserving affordable housing, but only about \$30M is included in this FY24 budget. We repeat our ask for \$60M in the FY24 housing trust fund: \$30M for new housing and \$30M for preservation. That is equivalent to 2 cents on \$100 of property valuation. It is imperative to increase funding now because, after a lull, *development pressures are picking up and we need to be nimble in grabbing opportunities for preservation-- or they will be lost forever.*

Topic 2. Fair Housing. The massive COG report on fair housing found that even as Fairfax County is becoming more diverse, it is getting more segregated, and inequality is increasing. People of color live mostly in segregated low-income areas.

OUR ASK: Today we will highlight the issue of enabling lower-income minority residents to own a home to build intergenerational wealth. This is so hard two reasons: Lack of lower-priced homes and possible discrimination in mortgage lending. We need to enlarge the supply of for-sale homes and conduct further mortgage discrimination testing followed up with lawsuits or enforcement against firms that discriminate.

Topic 3. Tenants Rights: During the pandemic, the county helped many tenants avoid eviction by providing access to legal assistance and rent relief funds. Although the pandemic is officially over, low-income communities are not back to normal. Yet last month they faced a sharp drop in food and rental assistance.

OUR ASK: We are grateful for the addition of a legal service attorney in eviction court and a proposal to increase rent relief from carryover funding, but it may not be enough. We support the Right to Counsel in eviction court. We encourage you to pay close attention to indicators of needs on the ground and act before the situation becomes desperate.

Topic 4. Homelessness. On April 1, 2022, 1,500 people were turned out of hypothermia shelters. They got tents and sleeping bags and went to live in the woods or elsewhere. A county task force on how to protect unsheltered people from the health effects of rising temperatures and frequent storms was told no additional funds were needed.

OUR ASK: Closely monitor the summer plan. Conduct an evaluation in September and continue developing a more robust program. The **Beacon Hill replacement for the old Kennedy shelter** finally made it to the drawing board but is still four years from completion. Meanwhile, the 100 -plus- year-old Kennedy shelter is well past being fit for service. **It is imperative this year to fund repairs to its HVAC system and drain the stinking cesspool in the subbasement or find interim shelter.**

The ultimate solution to homelessness is affordable housing, including more permanent supportive housing for those too old or ill to work.

DISPLACEMENT/MOBILE HOME PARKS

2. Marianela Renaydo

Good evening Chairman McKay and Supervisors. I am Marianela, speaking on behalf of Tenants and Workers United. For more than 35 years, TWU has worked with low-income communities of color across Northern Virginia, including in south Fairfax County along the Route 1 Corridor, with a focus on mobile home communities.

I started working with mobile home communities when the pandemic hit the country. Some folks used to tell me to be careful of the mobile home properties, saying those communities are dangerous and even calling them derogatory names like “ The Trailers of Terror”. However, what I found was united communities, hard workers who take care of each other. They love their homes because their work, schools, and other services are nearby. Working class people that were struggling not only because of the pandemic, but also because of their housing conditions, forgotten for decades by the local government.

It's great that the County is focusing on building more units of affordable housing. However, we must be aware that while you may be building housing on one hand, on the other hand you are losing great opportunities to preserve communities like mobile home properties. We know that you have approved the recommendations of the Mobile Home Task Force, and that you have allocated funding for one staff person to work with mobile home residents, but we need more than that. We need funding and action to protect families.

Mobile home communities provide unique opportunities for low income families to own their own homes. Over the past two years, large out-of-state companies have bought up various mobile home communities, leaving current residents uncertain about their future and unable to control any drastic and unfair increases in fees or rent.

While you work on the 2024 budget, we urge you to:

1. Allocate \$60 million total to preserving or replacing affordable housing
2. Allocate a significant amount of that funding for mobile home residents to buy the land of their community, with support from community partners and other stakeholders
3. Allocate \$750,000 total for mobile home owners to make health and safety repairs and improvements

The One Fairfax Policy promises that you will “look intentionally, comprehensively and systematically at barriers that may be creating gaps in opportunity.” One way to address these systemic opportunities is to allocate adequate funding to the preservation and improvement of mobile home communities. We invite you to explore all possibilities, including but not limited to land purchases, co-ops, and land trusts, to help residents secure home ownership and housing stability in the communities they love. We must get creative and proactive with how we reimagine affordable housing.

Thank you for your consideration.

3. Glenda Benitez	(Harmony Place Mobile Park)	
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4/12/2023

FY2024 Speech

Good evening chairman, McKay and supervisors, thank you for having us here today. I am Glenda Benitez, a community member of Harmony Place Mobile Park.

I moved to Harmony Place in 2017 with my father. Then I met my husband, and the rest is history. I would describe my small home community as exclusive, also a community that has potential. In our community we all help each other. That’s the best part. One of my neighbors changes our water heater, my other neighbor helps us remodel our carpet, and the most important of them all babysits my infant child.

When I moved to the community in 2017, it was in horrible conditions. You can smell something was wrong with the plumbing, homes would flood due to the creek nearby. As I mentioned previously, we fixed our own water heaters, we remodeled our own homes, and we fixed our own plumbing to the best of our abilities. I personally spent cold winters because the circuit breaker had issues, and I had 10 to 15 minutes to shower because the water heater didn’t work. We didn’t have adequate attention.

With the help of the County and a non-profit organization – Tenets and Workers United, we have had some repairs done. But our worries continue to this day. We worry about the rent. What if the property owner decides to add to the rent? Or if the property owner decides to sell? We would be homeless.

While you work on the HY2024 we urge you to allocate a significant amount of funding for the mobile home park acquisition created by community members with the support of community partners and other stakeholders. We are asking for funds to preserve our community. We are asking for funds that can help with repairs. There are homes on the property that are suffering from mold due to plumbing. But mainly supervisors, we want security. We want to **ownership** of our homes, and we want to build on that ownership, creating generational wealth for our children.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our concerns and our request today.

4. Juan Antonio Margain, Penn Daw Mobile Home Park

Good evening Chairman McKay and Supervisors, My name is Juan Antonio Margain, I am a resident and member of the Penn-Daw Terrace mobile home community.

I have been living in this community for 25 years and paying my taxes to this country. Just like me, there are other residents who have lived here for the same period of time or longer.

Our children were born in this community. For us and our children this is our home and we would not like to lose our houses. All of us are afraid and concerned about the development of the Route 1 corridor. We have seen that in the last year, three mobile home communities have been sold to large companies or investors, and from what we have seen we believe that the same future awaits us. We do not want, nor would we want to, lose our home. We are hard-workers and low-income people. In December we received a rent increase of \$150. Without first receiving a correct notification. We are already paying a rent of \$1,100 a month, so this is added to all the costs for the services of water, electricity, gas, etc.

For this reason we are asking you to help us, listen to us and include us in the budget you are working on today. We ask:

2- To allocate funds for the preservation and repair of our communities.

2- Look for a proactive plan so that we, the tenants, own the land, either in conjunction with other non-profit organizations.

Or that you manage that the entire county buy this land from the current owner. As they have done in previous years in another trailer community that is in this area and where residents pay around \$500 for the land.

Thank you very much for your attention and consideration.

FAIR HOUSING

5. Eugene Buck/ Neera Datta

Note that Neera Datta will deliver Mr. Buck's presentation if he is called to a family emergency.

Good evening supervisors. My name is Eugene Buck and I reside at 11811 Briar Mill Lane, Reston, VA. 20194 in the Hunter Mill District. I am chair of the subcommittee on Fair Housing of the NAACP Housing Committee and retired from the Congressional Research Services. For several years my subcommittee has followed the county responses to the [2017 Analysis of Impediments](#) fair housing report, as well as the creation of new goals and strategies for fair housing by 8 jurisdictions in Metro DC overseen by the Council of Governments (COG).

The new goals broaden the scope of fair housing from complaints and investigations of discrimination to include increasing the amount of affordable housing through building and preserving it and through planning and zoning changes to allow it to be built, as well as the need for affordable housing to be near essential services such as public transit, education, and job opportunities.

Our housing committee recently filed extensive comments with COG on their report and you will receive copies. We hope to work with you to develop a set of measurable actions under the COG goals and strategies that can be evaluated annually.

Today I will address only one goal with two proposed solutions, both of which need county funding. The goal is to increase the rate of homeownership by people of color, especially Black people who faced generations of housing discrimination and being pushed off their own land in NOVA, as elsewhere, as documented in the recent report [Deeply Rooted](#).

Currently, In Fairfax County minority homeownership is stifled by 1) a shortage of affordable homes (including townhouses and condos) for sale and 2) a continuing discrimination in mortgage lending. For example, a recent (4-6-2023) search of Zillow found only 24 townhouses between \$350-\$450K and only 54 2-bedroom condos between \$175 and \$350K in Fairfax County. The department of Housing and Community development, which administers the set-aside of a small number of affordable for-sale units in new developments, placed only 5 families in homes last year. A more serious approach might include building prefabricated homes/ townhomes on scattered county sites that would be sold under a shared equity model or creating a county Community Land Trust to allow building under cooperative ownership. We could also offer more serious downpayment assistance.

A Black loan applicant in the United States is more than twice as likely to be denied a home mortgage as a white applicant. [Recent research](#)¹ shows signs of continuing discrimination in mortgage lending and we have indications of it in Fairfax County based on paired testing that shows black and white applicants were treated differently.² We need to fund additional testing and follow through on enforcement by the county attorney on lenders that discriminate. We should also remove all county funds from banks that discriminate in mortgage lending as recommended by the author of the 2017 report on Impediments to Fair Housing.³ We should also continue testing and enforcement for discrimination in rentals.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you.

6. Cookie Blitz

Good afternoon. My name is CHB and I live in HM district. I am a member of the NAACP fair housing subcommittee and will address some of housing barriers People with disabilities face.

The COG Fair Housing report states that federal funding and inclusionary zoning are inadequate to meet housing needs for PWD. Fairfax County needs to identify and employ innovative funding streams to supplement these efforts. PWD may be disproportionately excluded from rental housing under some federal program rules, particularly those with criminal records/interaction with the criminal justice system. Our county needs to ensure that reasonable accommodations for PWD are strongly considered in this regard, and educate landlords and other community members as well.

¹ Debra Kamin, Nov. 29, 2022 , *Discrimination Seeps Into Every Aspect of Home Buying for Black Americans* The National Association of Real Estate Brokers says discrimination is holding Black buyers back in all steps of the home buying process, starting with the rejection of a mortgage application, New York Times .

² Fairfax County Human Rights Commission, 2002, Fair Housing : Rental, Sales, Lending Testing Report.

³ [Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing](#), 2017, See p. 280 “The county can, however, commit to depositing its cash reserves and operating funds at financial institutions that do not discriminate and withhold such deposits from institutions that do.”

A common challenge in finding the right housing is the lack of a readily available, accurate listing of accessible units. This was also cited in the COG report, along with the imperative for neighborhoods with accessible streets and sidewalks, and proximity to transit and paratransit options.

Design standards are an important consideration for affordable, accessible housing. We request a minimum of 10% of all units in multifamily housing that receive public \$ be accessible to those with mobility issues and 4% or more be accessible for those with hearing/visual needs. Universal Design should become a standard *requirement* for supportive housing in FCRHA properties and the 50+ Action Plan.

OHREP enforces the Fairfax County Human Rights Ordinance and the Fairfax County Fair Housing Act. In 2020, 47% of complaints to OHREP regarding housing were disability related. Between 2018 & 20, the # of housing cases based on disability doubled. We request that OHREP devote greater resources to testing and enforcement, so the full depth of discrimination is revealed, fair housing outcomes are delivered to County residents, and landlords and others who are violating the law are effectively deterred.

Accessibility should never be an afterthought, but that is what often happens. Properties are developed, buildings go up, communities take shape and measures to ensure compliance somehow get lost. At the Boro in Tysons which describes itself as “luxury and upscale”, there are no ADA compliant parking spaces on the street. They are all in the parking garage which is contrary to requirements. The creation of a consumer citizen entity to assist in monitoring compliance while planning and construction are occurring is necessary. Mistakes and oversights are identified BEFORE they are literally, and figuratively, cast in stone.

Fair housing requires both a financial investment and policy commitment to those who have long been denied safe, affordable, appropriate housing in our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process.

TENANTS RIGHTS

7. Arona Kessler, eviction court

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Thank you for this opportunity to speak on Fairfax County’s budget. I am a housing paralegal during the day. However my testimony today is given as a resident of the Route One corridor and a member of the Fairfax County NAACP Housing Committee.

As you have heard, our county residents have a lot of needs when it comes to housing stability. I would like to highlight a portion of the regional draft fair housing plan for your budgetary consideration. This plan calls for a Right to Counsel pilot program for Fairfax County and neighboring jurisdictions. I am quoting directly from the draft fair housing plan, “Thousands of residents in the region are displaced annually due to evictions. According to local legal services and fair housing organizations, many evictions occur because tenants do not understand their rights and/or their obligations. It is estimated that only a small percentage of tenants facing eviction have legal representation, and those without representation almost always are evicted, regardless of a viable defense. In 2021, Maryland passed a Right to Counsel bill that would provide access to counsel for low-income tenants facing eviction, but it is inadequately funded. There are several legal providers in the region that are well positioned to serve low-income

tenants, including undocumented tenants. Although there would be an up-front investment, legal representation is less costly than serving families experiencing homelessness.”

Important reforms and improvements have been made to the Virginia Residential Landlord Tenant Act over the past couple years, such as requiring Landlords to provide a notice of tenant rights and responsibilities, and an expanded right of redemption, where they pay the amount owed and may stay in their rental unit after losing in court but before an eviction takes place. When a tenant does not have the benefit of an attorney, they may not be aware of these rights, or that there are several, specific steps a landlord needs to go through to lawfully evict them. A tenant cannot assert their rights in court if they do not know what those rights are.

Eviction cases are heard in Fairfax every Friday, and I invite every member of the Board of Supervisors to come and witness up to a hundred tenants try to navigate a legal system that was set up to benefit their landlords. The first court hearing is called a first return, and at that hearing a judge will say to the tenant “you are here because your landlord alleges you are in breach of your lease for non-payment of rent, and they are entitled to a judgment of money and possession, do you agree or disagree?” Tenants are expected to answer this question immediately without an explanation of what it means. In this way many tenants unknowingly waive their right to a trial and eviction proceedings can move forward based on a tenant’s confused admission.

Legal aid is present at the Fairfax County courthouse five-days a week to provide general information and how to apply for their services. Without right to counsel and a commensurate budget allocation, legal aid is not able to meet the current demand for services in Fairfax County. Since pandemic related protections expired, the amount of evictions being filed has increased markedly.

With a robustly-funded right to counsel program, housing attorneys can explain to tenants what their rights and options are. They can help tenants access rent assistance or other resources that can help the tenant comply with their lease. Housing attorneys can also negotiate on behalf of clients for move out agreements or other compromises that allow tenants to leave their current housing with dignity and protect the interests of all involved. This investment in right to counsel can make Fairfax County a regional leader in fair housing and decrease the need for services related to homelessness and emergency shelter.

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8. Jerry Poje

I’m **Jerry Poje**, grateful for your leadership towards supporting “Affordable Homes for All.” Better mobilized, our community can and must do more.

My spouse and I, with Ph.D.s in public health and cancer research raised our beloved daughter here but could not duplicate our experience today if starting anew in Vienna. Gentrification excludes all like us. And its worse for many others.

Ensuring affordable homes became my congregation’s imperative - ever since nurturing an interfaith hypothermia shelter. Over 19 years we’ve serves hundreds of neighbors.⁴ Longtime tenure on our County’s Human Services Council and Affordable Housing Advisory Council informs my testimony.

⁴ See our UUCF Congregational Resolution committing us to end and prevent homelessness thru providing affordable homes: <https://uucf.org/social-justice/congregational-resolutions/resolution/>

Within the larger group framework of our group of testifiers, please drive our next county budget to prevent evictions by ensuring two proven strategies: ensuring rights to counsel; and maximizing rental assistance to those in need.

America is facing a historic eviction crisis. Amid a nationwide housing shortage, rents are surging to unprecedented levels, and many renters cannot keep pace.⁵

State eviction protections ended last June. Federal rental relief ended this year. Low-income communities are not back to normal and last month they faced a sharp drop in food benefits and rental assistance. Emergency medical benefits may soon end for some.

More than 3.6M evictions are filed each year.⁶ Tenants facing eviction risk losing their home and personal property. Evictions increase the risk of homelessness and further housing instability. Evictions can disrupt employment and education, and lead to adverse mental and physical health effects. During Covid evictions led to increased infections and death. Only 3% of tenants are represented by counsel. Represented tenants are more likely to remain housed, more likely to pay less in costs, and more likely to get more time to move.

We're grateful for supporting an additional legal service attorney in eviction court and a proposal to increase rent relief funding from carryover, but it may not be enough. Pay close attention to the needs through nonprofit and faith communities closest to those at risk. Act before their situation becomes desperate.

On the Rte 1 corridor and elsewhere they have been sounding the alarm that conditions are bad and county assistance is not enough. Some of them testified earlier. We thank you for providing some extra carryover funds funds for rent and food but we insist that you continue to listen to their assessments of the situation and respond.

Second, monitor data on both the number of evictions and the number of unlawful detainers issues each month. The unlawful detainer is the first step in an eviction telling the tenant to go to court. This number rose sharply in January, February and March to the highest levels in years. Many tenants 'self evict' when they get this notice because they don't know how to fight an eviction and they don't want an eviction on their records. Their exit deeply disrupts family life and our local economy. Armed with political will, Fairfax can move in a better direction to our collective benefit. Together we must build back better.

⁵ See the recent report from the ACLU, "No Eviction Without Representation" (2022) <https://www.aclu.org/report/no-eviction-without-representation?redirect=evictionbrief>

⁶ See report from the Eviction Lab: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2019/05/GROMIS_Ashley_Paper.pdf

HOMELESSNESS

9. Kelcy M. Allwein, Major (Ret), US Army & DoD Civilian (Ret)

Good afternoon, Supervisors McKay, Storck, and Lusk, ladies and gentlemen. I am Kelcy Allwein, retired US Army officer and DoD civilian. I have lived in Mount Vernon District for 31 years but mostly drove through it till I retired in 2019 and joined Rising Hope Mission Church as a member and one of the church leaders. Since then I have seen the local community through a new lens showing the poverty and homelessness present along the Highway 1 Corridor. And I have made friends among people who are homeless like David & Lisa who were blessed to get a room in a walkout basement on 1 April just after Rising Hope's Hypothermia Shelter closed. Another friend, Gerry is also homeless and in a wheelchair. David promised his old tent to Gerry just this last weekend since he and Lisa didn't need it. Can you imagine being in a wheelchair and have to put up a tent so you can stay out of the weather? And sleep on the ground when you can barely walk at times. It breaks my heart to see Gerry and others homeless. I see so many good people around the local community who need help getting housing. Many homeless people do not have good credit ratings which is often a requirement for affordable housing. And many have disabilities like Gerry or mental health challenges. I would like to see more affordable housing near the Original Mount Vernon High School. I have been monitoring the redevelopment and am most concerned about the 22 acres which seem to be undesignated in Phase 2 and 3. I would like to see housing so that my friend Gerry and others have a place to live. I would like to see a system set up to help people build credit ratings. Lastly I would like to ensure that the end of the Pandemic Health Emergency doesn't create new homelessness as people lose the resources that it gave to them.

10. Alicia Archer

Good afternoon/evening Chair McKay, Supervisors Lusk and Storck and other supervisors My name is Alicia Archer. I live at 220 Russell Rd, Alexandria, Va in Lorton and I work at Rising Hope Methodist Mission Church on Rte 1 as the community ministries coordinator. I am also in charge of cooking lunch there for homeless people who come in. Sometimes that is the only meal they get in a day. We used to have about 25 come in, but last week we had 60 people. We stretch the food as far as we can, but our food is all donations from other churches and individuals. We don't get money from the county. I understand that some of you think the county provides food and shelter for all poor people, but there are a lot of people who don't get any money from you.

On April 1, when homeless people left our hypothermia shelter (which is really just the floor of our meeting room) they had nowhere to go except out to sleep in the woods or at a bus stop, or maybe double up with somebody. At the hypothermia shelter, we have a limit of 28 people from the Fire Marshal. One man had to be turned away and he died. First he lost his hands and feet and then later he died. A lot of people live on disability income of about \$700 a month. They spend it all on rent at motels and it doesn't last through the month. Some pay about \$300 in advance for a week. They come here for their food and everything else. We have the old Kennedy Homeless Shelter 4 miles down the road, but it has a really bad smell and makes you get sick. You can't know what it is like until you go there. It takes 50 homeless men and women and another 25 during hypothermia season.

A lot of homeless people are sick. Some get physically sick because they live a hard life. Some are mentally ill and we can't make them do things to take care of themselves because the law won't allow it. We don't know how to help them except to bring them in for lunch and to be with other people.

We are doing our best at Rising Hope. We got a grant for a food pantry, but we don't have enough money and donations to meet all the needs here. Some of the other churches in the area also help people a lot with their own resources.

We always tell people to call the county help line, but they don't always get any help. The help line sends them back to us, but the county doesn't give us any money to help them.

So I came here to tell you that there are a lot of people out there with needs that are not being met and they need more help with food and shelter and health care both mental and physical. **I really think you should provide better shelter for homeless people on Rte 1 now and not wait for four more years for the new shelter to be built at Beacon Hill. The Kennedy shelter air conditioning keeps breaking down in the summer. You could either fix up the Kennedy shelter and get rid of the cesspool smell or temporarily fix up some of the empty buildings along Rte 1. People need a safe place to sleep. It would also be nice if you could figure a way to help the churches who help other people. We do a lot on our own, but things seem to be getting worse since the pandemic and we are having trouble keeping up with it.**

So thanks for listening. I cook a big lunch at Rising Hope every day. If you would like to come over for lunch and meet some of our guests, let me know. Last week we had taco salad, corn alfredo, and curried chicken.

11. Cyndi Jones

Good evening Chairman McKay and all the Fairfax County Supervisors.

My name is Cyndi Jones. I am a native Northern Virginian, having lived here in Northern Virginia my entire life of 68+years. I have seen an ever increasing gap between wages and the ability to pay for housing. When I grew up in the 50-60's there was little to no homelessness. As we got in the late 80's 90s and since Y2K rents have progressively skyrocketed and wages have not kept up. In fiscal year 2021, 60 percent of AMI for a family of four in Fairfax County was \$77,400. A family or single mother cannot make near that on minimum wage.

I have been a part of trying to end homelessness for many, many years. I remember well when we started the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness in 2007 with a goal to end homelessness in 10 years. That would have been 2017. Six years past the goal, we are no closer to closing that gap, in fact I believe it is much worse.

My current employment is at Rising Hope Mission Church. We do our best to assist the homeless and those experiencing abject poverty in South County. I am the first voice on the phone, the answer to an email and the first face most people encounter at Rising Hope. Despite our efforts, we are often not able to help these people meet basic needs, such as housing, jobs, transportation, and medical/mental health care. There is not a day goes by that I do not have at least 2 requests for assistance for rent, utilities or other basic needs most of us take for granted. It breaks my heart every time I have to say I am sorry, I don't have an answer for you. Non-profits cannot do it all. Our money comes God through generous givers, but it doesn't begin to put a finger in the dike. Every week, we supplement 250-300 families with food. Every day, we provide lunch to those that otherwise probably would have nothing to eat. During the winter we allow 28 homeless men and women to find a warm place to lay their heads. On April 1, they walk out the door and are no better off than they were before.

How can we let this happen in one of the richest counties in the United States? What can we do, as your constituents, to help you in understanding that we are all a few paychecks away from being in the same predicament as many of the people I am advocating for. I implore you to find money to build affordable housing opportunities such as SROs and tiny houses that have been successful in other parts of the country.

Housing has been proven to increase dignity, reduce incarceration, decrease ER visits, and reduce crime. Sounds like a WIN-WIN to me.

Thank you for your time.

CLOSING

12. Therese Chaplin

Good evening supervisors. My name is **Therese Chaplin**. I am speaking as an individual, but I am a member of St. Martin's Episcopal Church and the NAACP Housing Committee. I live at 6027 Bitternut Drive in the Franconia District.

This is my first time testifying, and veterans advised me to share a personal story, that would pull on your heartstrings. Actually I have never had to worry about shelter. Or choosing between paying for rent or food or medicine. But the pandemic made me understand some things:

During the pandemic, I witnessed people desperate for the basic needs of food and shelter. I remember long lines of cars stretching way down Franconia Road, waiting to turn into Key Center, for free food. During the pandemic, I witnessed the brutal murder of George Floyd and was jolted to the awareness that this country has much more work to ensure justice for all.

My faith community began to really look at the issues in our country and in Fairfax County. We looked at housing, after affordable housing projects proposed in our own neighborhoods were getting pushback from other residents.

Why is housing out of reach for so many? Housing is life's essential building block, and as in so many other areas, people of color are disproportionately affected.

And during the pandemic, I became a grandmother for the first time. I heard Chairman McKay, during this year's Housing Symposium, talk about his grandmother, and how you should listen to grandmothers.

And so, I will repeat the asks from Mary Paden's opening remarks:

1. Put \$60M in the FY24 budget for both building and preserving affordable housing,
2. Use \$30M of this for a strike fund to preserve Affordable Homes, both stick-built and manufactured.
3. Create a new position in the Dept of Housing and Community Development focused on mobile home parks and create a comp plan amendment to address the pressing issues.
4. Enable lower-income minority residents to own a home so that they can build intergenerational wealth.
5. Mandate a Right to Counsel in eviction court and fund legal aid attorney positions to meet the need. Add funds for rent and food relief as needed since we have not returned to a pre-pandemic economy.

6. Reexamine the plan and funding for summer heat relief for the homeless.
7. Fund repairs to the AC and the stinking cesspool at the Kennedy homeless shelter, or find alternate quarters while we wait for its replacement.
8. Hire staff to provide mental health services, police interventions, food, and most importantly permanent shelter to our least fortunate neighbors.

We who are fortunate have a moral responsibility to ensure all have equitable access to housing, especially to those still suffering the effects of systemic housing discrimination.

We have a responsibility to our pandemic heroes –health care and grocery store workers, first responders, teachers, all those who provided for the rest of us -- for them to be able to live in Fairfax County where they work.

We have a responsibility to make sure our vulnerable population -- our seniors, and those living with disabilities, and the homeless – have homes and be able to thrive.

We have a responsibility to leave a legacy of a fully realized ONE FAIRFAX, where everyone has access to safe and affordable housing.

Please hear this grandmother. Thank you.