



[Affordable Housing](#)

[Resident Life](#)

[Youth Services](#)

[Reentry Housing](#)

**Testimony of Martin Mellett
Vice President – External Affairs
Jubilee Housing, Inc.
Before
COUNCILMEMBER ANITA BONDS, CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATION
June 4, 2021**

Good morning, Council Chair Bonds and Members of the Committee. My name is Martin Mellett and I serve Jubilee Housing as Vice President for External Affairs.

Few investments offer greater long-term impact for inclusion and equity than affordable housing development. Few factors affect health and prosperity more than where you live. To promote equity and inclusion now and in the future, we must invest heavily in safe, healthy, affordable housing. And for residents and families whose income is at or below 30% of the Area Medium Income (AMI), the availability of housing affordable at their income level is even more critical and could be the last barrier before homelessness. As the city embarks on a critical review of all new legislation through a racial equity lens, we believe that strategies to ensure our lower income and minority residents have access to affordable housing are some of the most important strategies to address racial equity.

Jubilee Housing, founded in 1973, works to build diverse, compassionate communities that create opportunities for everyone to thrive. 47 years later, Jubilee owns and operate 10 deeply affordable housing properties, in the now thriving, resource-rich Adams Morgan community, where gentrification threatens to displace countless long-term residents. Recognizing the role we can play in the Adams Morgan neighborhood to combat gentrification and maintain an inclusive, diverse community, and the power of zip code we can offer to low-income residents, Jubilee has come to understand its work as Justice Housing - deeply affordable housing, in thriving neighborhoods, with supportive services onsite and within walking distance.

By bridging the gap in access to resources between lower- and higher-income District residents, Jubilee is bridging the gap in outcomes that divides our city along both racial and economic lines. To help Jubilee residents leverage the resources and opportunities around them, Jubilee provides supportive services both internally and through a network of local partners within walking distance. Our internal services include Youth Services for children K-12, Family Services, and Transitional Housing for men and women coming home from incarceration.

As our city emerges from a year of pandemic shut down, it is critical that the city focus its efforts on those who bore the brunt of the economic shut down. The city should target both appropriated funds as well as the federal funds approved through the American Recovery Plan (ARP) towards those individuals and communities most impacted by the pandemic. ARP funds amounting to over \$3 billion presents the city with one of the rare opportunities to address a long term racial equity imbalance.

Jubilee Housing is an active member of the Coalition for NonProfit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) and fully supports its FY 21 Supplemental and FY 22 budget recommendations for DHCD, the Housing Production Trust Fund, and the Local Rent Supplement Program. We are certainly pleased that the Mayor's budget includes a significant increase in HPTF - the critical gap capital needed to move projects in the pipeline forward and to prepare for a new RFP designed to grow our city's portfolio of affordable housing. We believe that we will see increased demand on HPTF funds due to significantly increased costs of construction as well as a pent up demand for TOPA projects which had been tolled during the covid moratorium.

With the increased availability of HPTF capital, it is critical that sufficient LRSP is available to ensure that the city abide by HPTF guidelines which seeks to ensure that 50% of the HPTF awards support housing which can serve residents earning 30% and below of the area medium income. Without the availability of sufficient project/sponsor based LRSP in the next DHDC NOFA, developers simply will not propose housing for this population and the city will not reach the goals the Mayor stated as recently in her announcement of another set of HPTF awards. While the Mayor's proposed LRSP budget only increases LRSP funding by \$2.9 M in FY 2021, it also proposes another \$39 M in LRSP be available over the next 3 years. Developers and investors need to be confident that these rental subsidy funds will be appropriated and available when projects are ready to be occupied.

Jubilee also supports CNHED's recommendation to increase funding for technical assistance to assist tenant associations exercise their TOPA rights. The Mayor's FY 22 budget proposes a flat budget from FY21. We are recommending a \$5 M increase of funding in this area. Our experience as a developer of deeply affordable housing in the Adams Morgan/Columbia Heights neighborhood tells us that tenants associations who access strong technical assistance designed to understand and exercise their TOPA rights are able to make better decisions. Well informed decisions often result in the long term preservation of rental housing in an affordable manner. Indeed, 2 of our last 5 acquisitions resulted from tenant associations selecting Jubilee to develop their buildings into long term affordable projects. As the TOPA tolling period ends in August 2021, we anticipate a flood of building sales in the next 6 -12 months. TOPA rights will be triggered in the majority of those sales. Preserving rental housing for long term affordability is directly in line with the Mayor's overall goal of building/preserving 12,000 affordable units by 2025. However without strong TOPA technical assistance at this critical moment, the preservation opportunity will be lost.

Finally, we need to ensure full implementation of the Nonprofit Fair Compensation Act that was passed in 2020 and became law in 2021. Agency directors need to train relevant staff in the new requirements in order to be prepared to implement the law by October 1. Agencies also need to have funding in their budgets to implement the indirect cost requirements of the law without reducing services. This Act must be implemented according to the law so that nonprofits that provide services that are more necessary than ever can come back even stronger after the pandemic.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am available for any questions from the committee.

