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**PUBLIC HEARING**  
before  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING**  
of the  
**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND URBAN POLICY**

Held:  
April 8, 1983  
Room 317, State House Annex  
Trenton, New Jersey

**New Jersey State Library**

**MEMBERS OF SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Joseph Charles, Jr., Chairman  
Assemblyman John S. Watson, Vice Chairman

**ALSO PRESENT:**

John B. Lee, Senior Research Associate  
Office of Legislative Services  
Aide, Assembly Committee on Housing and Urban Policy

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**ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN S. WATSON (VICE CHAIRMAN):** Good morning. I'm sorry we are a little late this morning. We were waiting for the Chairman of this Subcommittee to arrive. From what I gather, he is en route here, and I think he will probably be here within the next fifteen to thirty minutes. I am Assemblyman John Watson; I am the Vice Chairman of this Subcommittee. I would like to welcome you here this morning for our housing hearing. Of course, as you know, we are holding hearings in central parts of the State to find out some of the needs, and some of your concerns about the housing conditions here in the State of New Jersey. I see we have with us the Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, Mr. Sidney L. Willis. Mr. Willis, if you would care to begin your testimony, I would appreciate your coming forward, please. Good morning.

**ASST. COMMISSIONER SIDNEY L. WILLIS:** Good morning, Assemblyman.

**ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON:** Do you have a prepared statement?

**MR. WILLIS:** No, I do not. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Sidney Willis; I am Assistant Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. My few comments this morning are intended only to indicate that we are grateful the Legislature is looking at public housing authorities, and some of the problems of the housing authorities throughout New Jersey.

This morning I would like to give you some brief introduction to the extent of those problems, and the extent of public housing that is available in New Jersey, and to suggest to you that the Department will be available to you throughout your hearings and throughout any work you undertake here, so we might provide whatever technical assistance and advice we can. I believe the short notice probably accounts for the fact that many of the housing authority directors themselves, who are most directly concerned with these projects, and who are attempting, I would say valiantly, to administer them under some very difficult circumstances, which I will describe to you, would want to be here, but, unfortunately, most of them were unable to make it. There is an active chapter in New Jersey of the National Association of Housing Redevelopment Officials. I'm sure that in time they will appear with formal statements and give you a great deal more information than we can.

Let me tell you just briefly that there are forty-six thousand, two hundred and sixteen public housing units in New Jersey. They are located in two hundred and sixty-seven projects in seventy-three different public housing authorities. Contrary, I think, to the public's interpretation, or image of housing authorities, we have both very large housing authorities which have, in the case of Newark, more than ten thousand units, indeed, I believe there are substantially more than that, but there are nineteen small public housing authorities in New Jersey which have less than one hundred units each. In addition, there are those that have anywhere from a hundred to five hundred units. There are thirty-five such authorities in New Jersey.

That will give you some indication of the spread throughout New Jersey of these units, many of which have been built over a long period of time. There have not been too many built recently, for some reasons I will outline for you. However, they are located in many different municipalities, many different sizes of municipalities in different parts of the State. They are financed, as I am sure you know, with contracts with the earlier Public Housing Administration, now the Housing and Urban Development Department. The contracts essentially allow a local authority to build a project by issuing bonds, and those bonds are then repaid out of annual contributions from the Federal government.

The notion at the time that many of these projects were accepted by the cities was that the projects would make payments in lieu of taxes, limited however, but some payment in lieu of taxes, and, also, that the projects would earn through their own rental income sufficient dollars to operate the projects. In many cases, that has not proven to be the case. It is partly the result of a national tenant selection process, which assures that the families with the very least income in a locality, gain access to those projects, which is, of course, a desirable objective. But, we also find that those particular households concentrated in those projects, with very low incomes, are obliged to pay only a limited percentage of their income for rent. Thus, the total rental income does not provide sufficient revenue to adequately operate many of the projects, particularly in view of the

rapidly rising costs of energy, which were unanticipated when the projects were built. Well, what has been the result of that? The larger municipalities have almost invariably been required to forego even their payments in lieu of taxes as an additional contribution to the project, to help it continue to operate. The Federal government in recent years has provided additional operating subsidies to the housing authorities to try to operate the projects and to fill the gap between rental income and operating costs.

I believe it would be the view of most housing authority directors in New Jersey that those operating subsidies are not adequate to properly administer the projects, and that is the major cause for the poor maintenance that is apparent in many of these projects and, also, for their lack of support any longer in many of our municipalities. The absence of municipal support has meant that almost all recent projects have been only for senior citizens, and we certainly know there are more than forty-six thousand families in New Jersey who need safe and sanitary housing units, of the type that only housing authorities and public housing units can provide.

I might tell you that in New Jersey, dating back to the very beginning of the local housing authority movement in the State, there has been on every authority an appointment of the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. So, there is one person on each authority who does have some responsibility in a sense back to the State government itself. From time to time, we have communicated with those appointees but, to my knowledge, not recently, other than to appoint or reappoint the members who are, of course, citizens of their own localities. But, there is a communication which could, perhaps, be more utilized than in the past. In addition, as I pointed out, the professional staffs, that both serve as executive directors of local housing authorities, many of them have been doing a very excellent job, and the Department of Community Affairs has supported, with demonstration funds, projects which have attempted to experiment with different ways to improve the quality of life in the projects. I might say that particularly in Jersey City, we are very pleased with the results of that over a period of time, and I will secure copies of their reports, which we have distributed to all local housing

authorities as a guide to how working with the tenants, with a maximum of tenant responsibility for specific areas within the buildings themselves, there have been outstanding improvements in at least some projects in Jersey City, which I think should be better known to other housing authorities.

I do not mean to suggest that all of the projects and all of the authorities are problem ridden. There are many, particularly the smaller authorities with few units, where very adequate housing is being provided. I think we should try to build on their experience.

I think that is really all I can say by way of introduction. I believe you will find when you do hear from the authority directors that their most serious problem right now is operating revenue. In addition, many would like to develop more units, and there is clearly a need for more units, but whether or not the localities, given the extent of additional subsidies that they have been required to provide for the foregoing of taxes, and also for providing additional municipal services-- In the City of Paterson, there is a special unit of the local police department which is active in the project sites. The intention, originally, was that the revenues of the project would provide for their own security, just as private developments do. These understandings with the localities have eroded over time, and the result has been a great reluctance to see more such projects develop.

Finally, of course, there is a gradual withdrawal of support at the Federal level for new development, partly because of the desire to assure, insofar as possible, that people of low income are not concentrated in small portions of a municipality, but can find access to housing throughout a municipality, or indeed a region. So, the emphasis in recent years has been on assistance to eligible families who could then select their own units, usually outside of publicly-sponsored housing. As long as the unit is standard and the rent is within a Fair Market Rent, the family can then rent the unit and pay 25% of its income for rent, and the additional subsidy up to the Fair Market Rent in that particular region is paid by the Federal government. That is a very large program; it is administered through the Department of Community Affairs for many parts of the State, primarily the rural areas of the State. It is directly administered



then by the larger cities and municipalities who have their own community development agencies, such as in Trenton and elsewhere.

That is seen as a substitute for, and certainly begins to solve one of the problems of concentrating people of low income, but it does not totally solve that problem, primarily because it is difficult to find units that rent even for the approved rental, and to find adequate units in the sense of their being standard, with all the services provided.

In my judgment, there will be no substitute for public-owned units, and certainly with 46,000 such units in New Jersey at the present time, given the need, everything possible should be done to prevent those from falling into disrepair and being moved out of the housing market. We cannot afford to lose those units.

I look forward to working with you, and our staff will certainly be available to you. I hope that given the opportunity, the people who are directly responsible for these units in many localities will be brought before your Committee. I think you will learn a good deal more about their problems than I have been able to convey. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this subject.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you, Commissioner. Before you leave, I would just like to ask you a question. We have 46,216 public housing units in the State, and this represents 267 projects?

MR. WILLIS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: What would you say your best guesstimate is regarding the need for more housing of this type?

MR. WILLIS: I do not have a figure at hand, and I would not like to suggest that the only way to house families of low income is by publicly-owned housing. I think there are some solutions in housing vouchers; there are some solutions in Section 8 assistance; and, there are certainly some solutions in the housing that our Department has been developing through the Housing Finance Agency, which does reach people of low income. However, I think that when it is all done, there is still a need to both maintain the actual publicly-owned units of the 46,000 we already have, and to provide additional such units for families of very low income who cannot find accommodations in any of the other types of programs that are offered.

What the size of that figure might be -- although I would be glad to try to give you an estimate of it, but I do not have such a number at the present time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: There is one other question I would like to ask you. Often you hear Mayor Holland here in the City of Trenton begging the different municipalities other than the City of Trenton to take their fair share of low-income housing. I remember when you were the consultant for housing in the county; I remember, also, we were talking about the Federal subsidy, but it would have to be a hundred units or more. You could not begin to get the subsidy unless it was a hundred or more units. I think at that particular time Barbara Sigmund and I served on that committee, if you recall, and we came up with the idea of -- possibly it would be a little harsh, the way some of the municipalities feel about low-income housing -- asking them to take a hundred units at one time within their own municipalities. However, we felt in order to take advantage of the Federal subsidy, we would take maybe four municipalities, or two municipalities, and have each take fifty, or each take twenty-five, and begin to do it that way, to at least begin to make a movement out of the City.

You know, I can agree with Mayor Holland when he says if we continue to put more of this kind of housing in the City, it is just more that the City will have to subsidize in many ways, with welfare, etc. It is a burden. We talk about fair taxation across the State, and we talk, also, about the major urban centers that have the larger welfare problems. In Morris County, they talk about the low welfare problem they have, 00.5%. Then, I look at my own county as a former freeholder, knowing that the welfare problem was 11.2% at the time I left a couple of years ago. In Newark, they had a 22.3% welfare problem. This is a heavy burden for the central cities. When we talk about making an equal distribution across the State, and the problems of taking care of our poor in a very urbanized State, a very densely populated State, it begins to tell me that in order for our cities to survive today with the high taxation they have to pay for housing, and all the other things they have to pay for-- We are overtaxing our people in the central cities. It is my feeling that the whole problem of taxation is not equally distributed across the State. Princeton has its own housing authority, is that true?



MR. WILLIS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: And, also, I think Hightstown has its own housing authority in the County of Mercer, and Trenton has a housing authority. I know we have a very successful housing unit in Lawrence Township, one of the finest. I think when they talk about housing, they use that as a showplace today, for what can be done in suburban areas. I know, too, that a municipality that doesn't have a housing authority will have to ask the county to intervene for them, if they choose to do these kinds of things we're talking about.

What is your feeling about a more active movement to see that these kinds of places accept more of the burden of housing throughout the State?

MR. WILLIS: I think you have outlined an agenda for a generation, but let me try to clarify a few points, sir. It will be important for the Committee to distinguish publicly-owned housing and the new forms of subsidized housing, which are essentially owned by private, nonprofit, or limited-profit sponsors. In recent years, while public housing, meaning publicly-owned projects, have been on the decline, the programs that have been successfully developed, I might say in many, many suburban areas, including, of course, Lawrence Township and Princeton Township in Mercer County, and Ewing Township, which is breaking ground this morning for a new development, that these projects are publicly assisted, but they are not publicly owned by housing authorities. They are private groups, in many cases nonprofit organizations, which have been formed for the purpose of trying to do something about housing in their own communities. We have developed in the last ten to fifteen years about 38,000 such units throughout New Jersey, and many are in suburban areas. These seem to be better accepted in outlying portions of counties, because they are owned by sponsors who are ordinarily leading citizens in the community, nonprofit organizations such as churches and civic organizations generally, some of which would band together, as I believe in the case of Lawrence Township, to develop these projects. They have received, in recent years, Section 8 assistance, which is a contract from the Federal government to pay the difference between rent received and the operating and capital costs of the project.

These have been developed and they are, by and large, quite successful. It is true at the present time that an economically feasible project of that sort has to be a hundred units, or close to a hundred units, and usually more. That program, I might say, at the present time, is threatened by the withdrawal of Federal support for new projects, but those that have been developed, we are working with and I think they will continue to be an important housing resource for many years to come.

The opportunities for counties in these programs have been several. In Bergen County, they have a very active countywide program which has been developing affordable housing using Section 8, and locating many of the projects, with full county support, in the suburban portions of that county. In Mercer County, the opportunity for urban county assistance has not been available, partly because the county is not quite large enough. There is a complicated formula which excludes Mercer County. The County of Mercer, at the time you were talking, was considering a so-called "Section 8 Existing Program," which would not mean developing any units, but would mean providing eligible families with the subsidies for up to five years, so they could rent housing units throughout the county, not necessarily in any particular project. The rent payment would go directly to the private owner of the apartment itself.

During the time of that discussion, the State, particularly our Department, that is the Department of Community Affairs, gained access to the units that were available to Mercer County, and began to provide those units to families in the county -- at least that assistance to families in the county. So, the county decided at that time not to proceed with its own program, since it would have been competing for the same units that the Department was, and it would have been serving the same families.

Our experience, I might say, has been that it is still very difficult, given a Fair Market Rent, which is a limit on the amount of rent that the Federal government will subsidize -- will make any payment toward at all -- given the limit on that Fair Market Rent and the tight housing market in the suburban portions of Mercer County, very few families have been able with that voucher -- in a sense, which

theoretically they can use anywhere -- to find an apartment outside the City of Trenton that rents for that Fair Market Rent. So, in part to make that program more workable in Mercer County, the Fair Market Rents have to be more realistic in relation to the actual rents people are paying in the suburban portions of the county. That is a problem to be overcome. Obviously, as you increase the allowable rent, the average cost of the subsidy per family is higher and, therefore, the number of families served is fewer. It is as simple as that.

I think the question of fair share which you mentioned, and the issue of the availability of housing for families of low and moderate income outside of center cities, are ones that were addressed by the State Supreme Court earlier this year. That, I believe, will provide some additional guidance to municipalities, particularly with regard to their own zoning policies. There is no way at the present time to project what the impact of that is likely to be, in terms of local interest in pursuing some of these kinds of subsidy programs that have been made available. The problem in New Jersey will be that if interest is greater, Federal support is reduced. So, the problem now will be how it may be possible to develop at least some lesser cost housing, some affordable housing, without a subsidy. That housing, practically by definition, will not reach the families which are provided for in publicly-owned public housing units. It just isn't going to work in that regard.

So, the answer for the families which are serviced by local housing authorities is not yet on the horizon. I believe that each of the cities that ultimately testify before you will represent a large need, in terms of the number of families living in substandard dwellings within their own jurisdictions, about which they know very specifically that to move those families to units which are standard, or to improve the units in which they presently live to bring them up to standard, is an expensive process. So, I have tended in my remarks, while recognizing a much larger problem, to also recognize that the first step along the road to solving that much larger problem is to keep in good repair that which we already have. That is what I would like to stress in my comments this morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Next we will have Angela Corbo, from the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Good morning.

**ANGELA CORBO:** Good morning. I would like to read into the record a statement by Milton A. Buck, Executive Director of the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority.

I am very happy to have the opportunity to submit this information to the Committee, because I sincerely hope that the State of New Jersey will assume an increased role in combating the growing problem, which can only have profoundly unhappy consequences for the people of New Jersey. The problem is the continuing and threatening decline of public housing. It is a decline which imposes increasingly hard conditions on large numbers of people whose homes today are in public housing, and whose homes in the future are most likely to remain there.

As you know, I am the executive responsible for the administration of what is, by far, the largest public housing community in the State, and one of the ten largest in America. Newark has nearly 13,000 public housing units, or considerably more than one-quarter of the total number of units statewide. The problems I will discuss here, however, are not confined to Newark. They can be found in many of the other 32,000 or more public housing units to be found in cities and towns around the rest of New Jersey.

Our problems in Newark, however, are made especially difficult by the fact that our public housing stock, on the average, tends to be old by public housing standards, and has a very high proportion of high-rise structures. Older, high-rise public housing in urban areas, surrounded by a large population and by the full range of social problems to be found in cities, are a proven formula for major problems in public housing. We have them in Newark.

Of our 13,000 units, more than 10,000 are over twenty years old. More than 7,000 are over twenty-five years old. Nearly 2,700 are age forty years or over. The age factor brings on equipment failures and a general decline which create ever-growing demands for repairs.

Unfortunately, we suffer from heavy vandalism that is sometimes rampant. The impact of that is found in such things as elevator and lighting failures. For many of our residents it adds to the problem of trying to maintain a healthy living environment.

Compounding our problems is a high rate of rent payment delinquency. The serious financial condition of the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority is complicated by the failure of a large number of tenants to pay the rent that is due for their apartments.

While facing all of these growing problems, and many others, our Authority has been hit with extensive cutbacks in Federal funding. These cutbacks have necessitated broad scale reductions in staff and in the services which we are able to provide.

In 1976-77, our Authority received total subsidy funding of \$21,097,000 for public housing operations. Five years later, in 1981-82, we received \$23,380,000. If an inflation adjustment of only 6% per year is made over those five years, it means that we received in 1981-82 only about \$13,433,000, against the \$21 million provided from the same source in 1976-77. The consequences of that kind of drastic cut cannot be escaped.

It is especially difficult to justify the policies which underlie these cuts when you consider that public housing was originally a Federal program, not a local program. It was in response to Federal policy, and with Federal dollars, that public housing was built. For the Federal government to back away from this program now seems beyond any justification.

It is important to emphasize that our Housing Authority has not stood still in the face of growing problems, even with the tightening of its financial situation. Through the utilization of funds granted under the Public Housing Modernization Program (MOD) of HUD, we have completed, or now have in progress, some \$25,600,000 in capital improvement work, since 1980.

This program has enabled us to make important progress in improvement of heating systems, electrical equipment, security systems, elevators, sewer equipment, garbage disposal systems, and other facilities. There is attached here, for the information of the Committee members, a report from the Authority to Mayor Gibson detailing this program.

The Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority also has undertaken a concentrated effort to improve the percentage level of

rent payments and to reduce delinquencies in that area as a further step toward improving its financial situation and maintaining its ability to provide the services which are essential to our residents.

Despite the recent progress, however, we continue to grapple with mounting difficulties arising out of the factors cited earlier in this statement. To fully understand our problems today, it is helpful to recognize also that the residents who are now in public housing in Newark generally must look forward to a permanent future in public housing.

At the time that public housing was initiated, and during the 1940's and 1950's, public housing was populated generally by people who had strong prospects of moving ahead on the economic scale. They were generally wage earners with improving job prospects, and had little need for social support programs. Today's residents, unfortunately, are frequently without jobs and without the hope of any but the most marginal of job opportunities. Also, today's social problems -- crime, drug abuse, sanitary problems, vandalism, and others -- are of far greater extent than those which prevailed in earlier years.

I fully realize that the members of this Committee and others in the New Jersey Legislature recognize the severe nature of our problems, even if not all of the details. My purpose today is to suggest that without help, public housing, as things are now headed, can only become a greater problem. Things will not improve unless there are some very important changes in public policy. I realize that the extent of the physical decay cannot be cured by the State, given the extent of the State government's own financial problems at this time.

However, I suggest that the Committee might be able to formulate and recommend programs at the State level, funded by the State, under which a far more effective attack could be made on the many social problems which weigh so heavily on public housing. Additionally, it would be possible to write into existing State legislation covering social programs, and into similar future legislation, specific provisions that would require that active steps be taken to insure that the benefits of these programs actually reach public housing residents. I would hope that legislation creating such



programs would also mandate that the public housing residents of New Jersey be participants.

Given the extent of the problem, and the number of people involved -- nearly 30,000 people in Newark alone -- I can only appeal to you with the proposition that New Jersey simply cannot allow the problems of public housing within this State to grow worse. It is unacceptable on a moral scale, and on a social scale.

Public housing in Newark needs help. The people of public housing need help. I would urge upon you that the State has it within its power to step up its attack on social problems in our cities, and to focus its efforts particularly on the problems to be found in and around public housing.

We are trying our very best to help ourselves in this respect. I have attached here a particularly interesting report on our efforts in connection with Soul-O-House, a drug rehabilitation program centered in public housing in Newark. The Soul-O-House story is encouraging, but it represents only a fraction of what must be done. We turn here today to the State of New Jersey with an appeal to take a fresh look at the problems of public housing and to help us develop new solutions, new social services and new ways of overcoming our social problems. We need your help, and on behalf of Newark's public housing residents I appeal for it.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you, Ms. Corbo. Would you like to read the Soul-O-House statement?

MS. CORBO: If you would like me to, I can. Assemblyman, it's up to you, but it is really basically for the Committee's information.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: All right, we will see that that statement is included in the record. I would like to ask you a question that I asked the Assistant Commissioner. Do you have any idea of the need, statewide, for more public housing, especially in areas like Newark, Trenton and Camden?

MS. CORBO: Certainly; you need to build more public housing.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: I would like to know the kind of waiting list you have? How far back does the waiting list go, and the kind of

disrepair in much of your housing, which is not being rented only because of the repair problems? I would like to hear some of that.

MS. CORBO: We have several thousand people on our waiting list. It probably goes back, I'd say, about three years. One of our problems at the Authority is that we have many large families that need to be housed. We do not really have those kinds of accommodations. Of course, we have to house them in the proper size apartments in accordance with all the mandates we operate under.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: When you say several thousand -- just give me some idea.

MS. CORBO: I would say 5,000 would be a pretty close figure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: And, about how many years? Would you say five years?

MS. CORBO: Yes, five years would be good.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Five years?

MS. CORBO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: What percentage of your housing is in disrepair?

MS. CORBO: I really couldn't answer that for you off the top of my head; I really don't know the percentage. I can, of course, get back to you on all of these questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: I notice you said many times about the State assuming the responsibility of some of the social problems you have. Could you be more specific in your request that the State come in and do something about the social problems? What, in fact, are you talking about, the security problems, the drug problems -- I would just like to hear what some of your concerns are?

MS. CORBO: Certainly, the security problems; certainly, the drug problems. A lot of our tenants are on some kind of subsidized income, and things like that, and they are being squeezed on the other end too, you know. I think all that kind of stuff, and I think the State may be able to help us with the vandalism problems.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: What do you have going for you in your projects as far as social workers coming in and giving you a hand with your problems?

MS. CORBO: Our Authority does have a Community and Family Services Division; however, we have been severely cut back in that also in terms of staffing and things. What we are in the process of doing right now, is enlisting the aid of all the community agencies on all levels, asking them to come into our Authority and actually service our people on site, if they can. We have been getting a pretty good response to that right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: You said you had a cutback, did you have a cutback in Federal funds or State funds?

MS. CORBO: Federal funds.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Federal funds -- what kind of a cutback?

MS. CORBO: I really couldn't tell you that off the top of my head.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: You wouldn't know?

MS. CORBO: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: What kind of services did the social workers perform for you? What did they do in general?

MS. CORBO: Any kind of family counseling, any kind of crisis intervention, the necessary social referrals that had to be done -- the whole gambit of social services was provided for our tenants, even in terms of medical help.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Do you still have, as we would call it here, the United Progress? In Newark, it was Model Cities. Do you have that type of program continuing in a community effort?

MS. CORBO: I don't believe so; I really don't know.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: All right. You would suggest that the State take a more active role in participating in the problematic part of your operation, to be able to eliminate some of the problems you have socially?

MS. CORBO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: And, I guess you're talking a lot about your security problems?

MS. CORBO: Yes, that's right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you for appearing before us this morning. We will make this other statement a part of the record too.

MS. CORBO: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Carolyn Hammonds. Carolyn is President of the Trenton Citywide Public Housing Tenants' Organization. Good morning, how are you this morning?

CAROLYN HAMMONDS: Good morning, Assemblyman. I'm fine, but I am a little nervous.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Just be yourself; you're always good.

MS. HAMMONDS: As I listened to the previous speakers, I sat there thinking we have heard from everybody except the tenants. I am really representing our tenant organization, our tenant council, and the tenants' views on what some of the problems are that exist in public housing and, also, probable solutions to them.

The first thing I would like to say is that we believe that -- first of all, public housing in Trenton is pretty good in our estimation. However, I live in a place called Miller Homes; it is one of the high-rise buildings, the only family high-rise in the City of Trenton. We have always believed -- one of the main things that we believe in Trenton, and in our Citywide Tenants' Council is that public housing for families should never be high-rise. We have had many problems concerning the high-rise with our families, and we feel, quite frankly, that Miller Homes should actually be turned over for a senior citizens' complex. We feel that people with children should never live on a tenth floor, or various floors of a high-rise building. They need personal space in order to grow.

We also feel there is a lack in the Trenton Housing Authority of sufficient space for large families. Even though we do have some three and four-bedroom houses, there is not a sufficient amount of space. We also feel that due to a lack of security on the part of the City, the social problems which confront us, vandalism, which is a crucial, crucial point in public housing, the drugs which are widely used, and crime, are certain problems that definitely should be addressed. We feel they are more or less accepted by tenants like us who do live in public housing, and we feel too that-- There is acceptance by the tenants, and yet there are not enough agencies-- I'm sorry, I can't remember what I was going to say, okay?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Do you mean the social part of the responsibility of the-- Do you mean at Miller Homes as a whole, the agencies that work with you in many ways?

MS. HAMMONDS: Even though the Trenton Housing Authority has a social program, we do not feel their services are really complete enough to deal with these types of problems, let's put it that way.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Okay. Then you would say that the agencies could stand some beefing up as far as the services provided by them is concerned?

MS. HAMMONDS: It could.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Such as what? Just give me an idea.

MS. HAMMONDS: Counseling, I think, would be one of the main things, for the people who live in public housing.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Anything else you would like to add?

MS. HAMMONDS: Oh, let me see -- tenant selection. We feel that in order for public housing to improve, they have to be selective in who they put in. We would like to see-- Even though they have a criteria for selecting people now for putting them into public housing, we feel that in general a complete overhaul should be done. In that way, we could sort of take care of the problem before it gets to be a problem, like I said, by meeting these people, interviewing these people, and having certain criteria for the people who are coming into public housing. Also, we find we have a lack of tenant participation on the Board of the Trenton Housing Authority. We do not have tenant participation on the Board. We feel that is one of our major problems, because we are unable to put our problems up front. We feel that by having a representative, or representatives, on that Board, our problems could be heard.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Were you not represented on that Board before?

MS. HAMMONDS: We have never been represented.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Never been represented on the Board?

MS. HAMMONDS: No, we have never been represented on the Board, not tenant represented.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: I knew we had been discussing that.

MS. HAMMONDS: We were trying for that, but we never got it. (Assemblyman Joseph Charles, Jr., Chairman, arrives at this point in the hearing.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Excuse me, our Chairman has just arrived, Assemblyman Joe Charles, and I am delighted to turn the hearing over to our esteemed Assemblyman here this morning. I am very happy to see you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Thank you, Assemblyman Watson. I am happy to be here now, although I am somewhat late. My lateness was occasioned by my giving testimony at a public hearing on public health matters concerning the Medical Center in the City of Jersey City, which is in the district I represent. So, I was there to give testimony on things concerning that. I am glad to be here now to continue with the public hearings we started back on March 25 in Jersey City, and I thank you, Assemblyman Watson, for conducting the hearing until I arrived. Thank you very much.

MS. HAMMONDS: I heard you say something about two things as I was coming in. One was about tenant selection, and the other was about membership on a Board. Is that the Housing Commission?

MS. HAMMONDS: The Board of Commissioners.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: The Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority, yes. Regarding tenant selection criteria, from my pre-hearing studies and also from the testimony given at the previous public hearing, it is my belief that the tenant eligibility criteria is essentially a matter of Federal regulation. Is that your understanding too?

MS. HAMMONDS: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: What is your understanding with regard to the tenant selection criteria, the thing you say should be updated, or upgraded?

MS. HAMMONDS: I feel it should be much stricter; we feel it should be much stricter, because it seems as if public housing in Trenton, from what we are seeing, has more of what I call "undesirables" coming into public housing.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: What changes would you like to see?

MS. HAMMONDS: Specifically?

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Specifically, yes.

MS. HAMMONDS: I would like to see potential tenants run through police--

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Police investigation -- a record check?



MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, a record check, to see if they are drug users, repeat sex offenders, or have been involved in any types of crime, repeatedly.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Okay. You know, I would like to get back on that, because that was an area which was raised at the previous hearing by others in connection with public housing in the northern part of the State too. It also came up -- tenant desirability or undesirability -- in terms of the removal of tenants from the housing authority, once something is discovered about a tenant. One of the recommendations by some of the tenant associations which testified at the earlier hearing was that the eviction laws in the State of New Jersey be changed in such a way as to allow the removal of these "undesirable" tenants in the projects. I assume from your comments that you would be in favor of something like that. Do you have any specific recommendations along that line? I ask that because of this. One of the problems you run into when you try to amend the eviction laws of the State of New Jersey is that the Tenants' Association of the whole State gets concerned that any modification might allow landlords in nonpublic housing to operate in a harassing or other fashion with their tenants. So, our attempt here to construct a law that would accommodate the interest you express has to be tempered against the kind of concerns that others have on another level. In my thoughts since the last hearing, I think it really comes down to a category of persons who seem to raise the most problems for public housing tenants, and that seems to be drug users and drug-involved people.

MS. HAMMONDS: Right, absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: You know, when we think about drafting legislation we have to have something that is draftable and workable too. I think that if we can narrow down some kind of an eviction policy, or eligibility criteria, to deal with drug-related persons, we might then be moving in the direction of addressing some of the concerns you have. Would you agree with that?

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, but don't the leases already specify certain things pertaining to that, which were mandated by HUD?

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: See, that is the problem. HUD has, in its bylaws and in its regulations which govern the local public housing

authorities, a provision for certain due process requirements and other things like that. That has been frustrating to some tenant associations in the removal of tenants they wanted removed from the place. I mean, they would have to go through a certain process. People would have to come to testify. It is a process that really, in some cases, did not satisfy the needs of the overall majority of the tenants in the removal of certain undesirables. Those are certain HUD regulations. Also, there is a law in the State of New Jersey about evictions which controls in this case, which requires certain notices to tenants who are disorderly, and things like that. What we have to do if we are going to address that particular problem, is to somehow draft some legislation that is consistent with Federal regulations, and, at the same time, allow due process rights to everyone concerned, those who you want to remove. The problem is a real one, as we have heard, but it is a complicated one, in that there is a balancing that has to take place, and it must be a very fine balancing.

That is one area, I think, which is going to be one of the by-products of these public hearings. I think that is going to get special attention by this Committee in terms of legislative recommendations.

MS. HAMMONDS: Is this hearing just on a State level? These hearings you're having, will they go into Federal issues?

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Well, what we are doing-- The primary purpose of the hearings is to evaluate public housing in the context of what the State can do to rate some of the problems. We start off with the recognition that our role may be a limited one, because public housing is essentially a Federal and local situation, and the State's involvement up to this point has been very, very limited. One of the things that came out of the last hearing too, is that perhaps this panel, or Subcommittee, might be suggesting that the State involve itself more integrally in the public housing situation. That recommendation is something that is probably nice to make, but in terms of actually expecting implementation of it, I don't think it can go very far, because as I see it, the basic need is money for operating subsidies and things of that nature, and the State has its own financial problems already without taking on other ones. That doesn't mean we won't be recommending that.

One of the things we've seen in the course of our studies is that the States of New York, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, for example, have public housing programs that those states sponsor. The states fund them; the states have their adjuncts to Federal government involvement with public housing. We are examining whether or not something can be fostered in the State of New Jersey, maybe not identical to, but similar to those state public housing programs which exist in other states. That is something we are going to be thinking about and evaluating.

Another thing you mentioned was tenant participation on the Board of Commissioners of the Housing Authority. That was one specific recommendaion, or thought, that I carried out of the last public hearing we had. In the housing authorities which were represented at the other hearing, they did have a tenant-- The history of those authorities indicated that at least one tenant was a part of the board. I think I heard you say there is no tenant who is a member of the Board of Commissioners.

MS. HAMMONDS: We have no representative in the City of Trenton.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: I think that is an area that, obviously, we can address by legislation. That is something that this Committee can do in its recommendation; we can recommend that the State public housing statute be amended to require that at least one member, or whatever, be a tenant from the public housing developments in the town. We can do that.

MS. HAMMONDS: We tried that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: We can recommend that; we can put that in the form of legislation, and then it is a matter of dealing with the Assembly, the Senate, and the Governor, to get him to sign that.

MS. HAMMONDS: We have gone through that, also.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: How long ago?

MS. HAMMONDS: A couple of years ago.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: What happened?

MS. HAMMONDS: It passed through the Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: And, it didn't go?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Was that bill asking--

MS. HAMMONDS: It was asking that a tenant be appointed.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: The State had something about tenant selection, was that it?

MS. HAMMONDS: No. We asked that at least one, or two tenants sit on that Board.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: I remember there were a couple of names put forth. I think at that particular time Dolly was one who was recommended for the tenant selection. I remember when they had that.

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, we had it, but it didn't go through. We went through all the channels.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Well, we didn't have a Subcommittee on Public Housing in those days; we have one now. You didn't have John Watson, and you didn't have me sitting on this Subcommittee. You have different persons now with a new interest. Believe me, unless someone can show me that the idea is off base, I represent to you now that that is one of the specific recommendations that is going to come out of this Subcommittee's hearings.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: You know, just recently, to give you some background on legislation recently passed similar to what you are saying, a consumer participant on commissions-- We just passed through the Assembly, and also through the Senate, a bill allowing a student to be a part of the trustee board of a college. So, that is similar to the legislaion we are talking about here. You know, we had a lot more flack to deal with with that, than we would with your case.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: In terms of that too, I told you I just came from a public hearing on the Medical Center and its Board, and one of the issues involved was the composition of the Board of Managers, which manages these public hospitals. I have introduced legislation in connection with municipal hospitals that the Board of Directors, for example, include one member who is a representative of the unions of non-professional workers there -- to incorporate that as an element. The point I'm making is that legislation along the lines of making sure Boards of Managers reflect the sensitivities of the groups being served, is something that people now think of, and it is becoming a lot more acceptable.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: That's right, so we are going to be pushing for that for you. There is one other point I would like to

raise, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Hammonds pointed out the fact that there should not be high-rise buildings, or the wholesaling of low-income family units on a high-rise basis. We find that this just hasn't worked out across the State, the warehousing of low-income people into a high-rise situation. It has done wonders for senior citizens, because it is controlled in many ways. But, when you begin to talk about raising the standards of living conditions, and raising the standards of those living within those conditions, you can't wholesale people under conditions that will have to have social adjustments. I think we should spread out that kind of low-income housing, whereby others can live in the community with you, to make sure there is a wholesome community. But, you can't expect anymore when you just warehouse in those situations. I have walked into Miller Homes many times, and the conditions there, at some times, were terrible. They are not that way now, because we have, as you said, people at the top who are doing a decent job.

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, they have made improvements, but high-rises are still not for families.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: You're absolutely right; I feel the same way.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Do you have any problems in the developments, to your knowledge, concerning services, such as outside vendors to public housing tenants? I mean, do you have a problem, for example, with cabs, with repair people, with United Parcel Service, people of that sort who provide services to the tenants? Are you discriminated against?

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, certain places will not deliver. That is a problem, I think, in our setting.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Is there any specific category which is identifiable?

MS. HAMMONDS: Furniture places. At one time, from my understanding, I was not living there at that time, Miller Homes had trouble with the bakery, the milkman and probably others who used to come there. They were afraid, because when you are mugged several times, naturally you would be afraid.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: What about the question of -- do you have any knowledge about whether the public housing tenants are discriminated against in loan applications and things like that? Do lending institutions, for example, just nix applicants on the basis of their place of residency? Have you had that kind of experience?

MS. HAMMONDS: I believe so. To be honest with you, I myself, when applying for other housing, always use my sister's address who lives out, because they automatically associate 125 Lincoln Homes with our projects and the problems we have, which have been highly publicized.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: So, it affects your ability to get credit?

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, it does.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Have you experienced that?

MS. HAMMONDS: I have not experienced that, simply because I work, but it has affected other people I know for a fact.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Okay. The fact that they are public housing tenants is sometimes used against them, without regard to what their real credit worthiness is. Is that what you are saying?

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes. I believe, too, that is the reason why a lot of people are taken -- you might call it taken. We have several furniture places in the City of Trenton with poor quality furniture, who advocate that welfare recipients are welcome. Yet, they get a really shoddy deal, from some of the things I hear, qualitywise. But, definitely, it is discrimination against public housing.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Another point that was raised at the previous public hearing by an Executive Director of one of the larger public housing authorities in New Jersey -- out of recognition of the realities and practicalities of the situation -- was, he suggested to the Committee that in addition to proposing, maybe, some grand and large type changes or actions by the State, the Committee should also consider doing things that might be considered small, but which nonetheless are important. For example, he indicated we ought to think about encouraging the Department of Community Affairs, or some other State agency, to make grants in the area of exploring tenant management types of programs. His suggestion, or his statement was that, although



they had previously had a Demonstration Grant and had developed a certain tenant management form, still the differences, the changes in circumstances, suggested there should be a continuous search for new tenant management forms to see what works, and what doesn't work. He suggested that certain modest funding from the State for demonstration funds might be helpful in the overall improvement of the projects. Would you agree with that?

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, and I understand they have had programs. I think one was called IPP in certain states where tenant management has worked. In fact, I think Boston, Massachusetts has a pretty good one, from my understanding of tenant management, where they are trained.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: They're trained?

MS. HAMMONDS: Yes, they have a training program, but these funds were set up by HUD, from my understanding.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: I have no further questions. I just want to thank you for appearing this morning. It gives us a lot of food for thought, and we intend to do something to help you.

MS. HAMMONDS: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Our next witness will be Mr. Martin Hillman.

M A R T I N H I L L M A N: Thank you, Assemblyman Charles, Assemblyman Watson. This is totally spontaneous. I had absolutely no awareness of the fact that I might be testifying this morning. I came here because I was told a day or so ago that the hearing was going to be held, and that there was to be a discussion concerning problems that housing authorities are having. I am very interested in knowing what, if anything, can be done to assist us with our problems.

I am the Director of the Trenton Housing Authority. I understand that the New Jersey Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities is going to make, as Commissioner Willis testified earlier, a formal presentation. I have absolutely no knowledge of what that presentation is going to be, because it could cover a whole host of things. The problems housing authorities are having are widespread and varied, and whomever was going to address the Committee as to the highest priority, or the biggest problem, would have the advantage of

putting their priorities forward. My priorities, in other words, might not be the same as some other executive directors throughout the State. I think, in other words, that each authority in the State of New Jersey has different problems, and that is because each authority in the State of New Jersey has different circumstances, different surroundings, different communities and, therefore, their priorities of what their problems are, are also going to be different.

Another suggestion that Commissioner Willis made was that the universal solvent of these problems was an increased operating revenue for the authorities. I will not argue with that. I would say that all authorities would agree. This would be a generalization, however, because as authorities, if we are given increased revenues, each of the authorities would spend those monies according to their own particular needs. If I had to assess what I thought the problems were in housing authorities, just from listening to my constituency and our tenants-- I believe, as was indicated earlier, there is an improved communication between the Trenton Housing Authority and its tenants, which I am pleased about. It was one of the things I thought needed serious attention when I came on board four years ago, and I believe it has improved. In listening to tenants, I think all of them are interested in good, decent, safe -- and I put an emphasis on safe -- housing. That, I think, is a generalization of their concerns. They need to not live in fear. They need to be able to have adequate and decent housing. That is to say, we have to attend to the maintenance needs of the buildings, specifically each individual unit within the building, as those needs arise. Therefore, we need adequate staff, adequate qualified staff, and it all comes back to money.

What the role of the State of New Jersey would be with respect to the various problems you'll hear at these hearings is hard for me to determine. It is hard for me to suggest, or submit to the State what, in fact, it could do, because of the limited capacity. I am not really sure, but if, in fact, the State were to devise the financing of a program and it were directed, for example, toward greater security for the tenants, I would think one of the things that could be done would be to insist that the housing authorities specifically be the beneficiaries of those funds, using them to

improve those living conditions and, in fact, to improve the safety standards within the authorities.

Comments have been made about the Trenton Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, and perhaps I should just take a second to touch on that. As I said, this is not a prepared statement, so I am piecemealing it as I go along here. The background, as I understand it with respect to the Board of Commissioners in our City, and with respect to the legislation that came up in the past -- as I remember it, it was that the bill which, I believe, passed, perhaps both houses, the Assembly and the Senate, was not signed by the Governor during the Byrne Administration. I believe the reason that was given was that there is opportunity through the various appointing authorities for a tenant to be appointed to those Boards of Commissioners. In the City of Trenton, we have seven commissioners, five of whom are appointed by the Trenton City Council, one by the mayor of the City of Trenton, and one by the State of New Jersey. There is nothing to preclude the State of New Jersey from appointing a tenant to the Board which, in fact, would satisfy the request of the tenants. I personally supported the effort to have a tenant on that Board, but I did it with some reservation, because I feel there is an undue -- perhaps there is -- an undue strain that would be placed on that particular person, or persons if there were more than one, to perform the impossible, as there are many problems, and there are waiting lists between 2,000 and 2,500 in Trenton alone for public housing. The frustrated individuals who have been waiting for somewhere between seven and ten years, depending on bedroom size, would be asking the tenant members of the Board to perform the function of tenant selection which, as you also indicated, Assemblyman Charles, is almost completely regulated by Federal standards. It is a frustrating experience not to be able to serve those who are in need of housing when, in fact -- let me say you are not able to serve all of those who are in need of housing -- because, in fact, you are serving one, the next one who is ready to be serviced, and that is the only one. If the person pressuring you is not the next one, then you have a serious problem.

The other thing, I think, that served as an obstacle to the success of this bill was the fact that the New Jersey -- as I remember

anyway, I don't want to be held to this, but I am almost sure that the New Jersey Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities came out in opposition to the legislation, saying, "It would not serve a meaningful purpose, and there is adequate opportunity for tenants to be on Boards." My own personal feeling is that if the rapport between the housing authority administration and the tenant association is good, the tenant association group might, in fact, be more effective as a lobbying group for the Board of Commissioners, requesting to be heard, requesting to be serviced, and requesting to be responded to properly, than, in fact, if they had one member on the Board and put all the pressure on that one member. One member would be very limited if he or she were not in the majority, as the State of New Jersey is limited in, perhaps, what it might be able to do with housing authorities as they are controlled by Federal legislation and regulations.

So, it does become a little bit frustrating, and perhaps the effect would be that the tenant request, assuming that the communication was good between the tenants and the administration -- that the effects of what the tenant organizations were actually looking to achieve would be better achieved as a lobbying group. That is a possibility. Having a tenant on its Board, is certainly not a threat as far as Trenton is concerned.

There is something that I discussed earlier this morning over coffee with Assemblyman Watson that I would like to make mention of. We have a specific problem in the Trenton Housing Authority, and perhaps it is only in the Trenton Housing Authority at this time because, if I am not mistaken, it was the Trenton Housing Authority that complied with this State legislation before all the other housing authorities. I am speaking about the legislation which requires smoke detectors in all dwelling units. The purpose and intent of that particular legislation is most desirable and most honorable and most good. Everything that it is intended to do is worthwhile. It is obviously designed to provide safety and well-being to the tenants. However, in one particular area which was also being discussed just a few minutes ago by Carolyn Hammonds and this Committee, the area of multi-family high-rises, I do not believe it is effecting what it is designed to do. In fact, the opposite is becoming true. Perhaps if I

give you an example of what I am talking about it would better show itself.

The legislation requires that in common areas -- and in Trenton we have Miller Homes, which is a ten-story high-rise, where the common areas are the three-pronged hallways of some sixty to seventy feet -- at every, I believe it is thirty feet, there be a detector. The thing about these detectors is that they are all, by law, on the same circuit. In other words, if the alarm on the fifth floor is triggered because of an excess of smoke or because of fire, the entire building alarm will go off, alerting the entire building, which is basically designed for the well-being of all the people, assuming there is a fire in the building. But, the assumption that there is a fire every time the alarm goes off is a gross miscalculation. There are, in fact, large examples of vandalism, especially in high-rise buildings. We have other high-rise buildings that are occupied by the elderly, and there are no problems whatsoever with these particular systems. But, where there are multi-family units, we found the alarms were going off at all hours of the day and night and, in fact, so frequently that tenants no longer took them seriously. So, the one time that a fire does, in fact, take place and the alarms go off again, they will be ignored, and life and limb will be in danger. The 256 units in the Miller Homes have individual alarms in them. I'm not sure I know the answer to this, but I heard Commissioner Willis say earlier that his Department -- and I believe it was his Department that drafted, or assisted in the drafting of that legislation, could -- I heard Commissioner Willis offer the help of his staff and his Department to provide answers to some of these problems.

I believe these are problems, because the Trenton Housing Authority has spent, on top of the purchase of these detectors, some \$163,000 for installation, and within a matter of months has experienced over \$20,000 in vandalism. The effect then is that the system is -- and by the way, the vandalism is partially understood. If I were a tenant living in the Miller Homes, and if at two o'clock in the morning that alarm went off and I had to get up at six-thirty or seven o'clock to go to work the next day, and that alarm were not turned off, or when it was turned off it went off again and again, and

disrupted my rest, I might be inclined to go out and rip the wiring out of the wall myself in order to make the thing stop. We have had extensive examples of vandalism, and expense incurred beyond the installation of the system, so the point I'm making is, I believe the State of New Jersey ought to take a look at that condition. Where they see that this legislation, in fact, is not meeting the mark that it was designed to do, perhaps the Department of Community Affairs can come up with some kind of an exemption, or some kind of a solution, which I believe housing authorities are going to have to assist with, to correct this particular problem. That is just one single problem. That is not to say it is my most serious problem, but it is to say it is related to what the State of New Jersey has direct control over. You are not serving in a limited capacity in this area.

Perhaps there are questions I might be able to address if you have any.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Yes, I do have some. The last item you covered dealt with what could be called State-mandated requirements, the smoke alarms, etc. Are there any other mandates which impose upon the Housing Authority which cost you, which are required by the State of New Jersey? You mentioned the smoke alarms, and that is something that was raised by an Executive Director of a housing authority at an earlier meeting, too. He indicated the same concern you have, and the same real problems with it in high-rise situations, the same kind of problems you described. Are there any other kinds of State-mandated activities or expense that the Public Housing Authority is subjected to that do not make sense anymore, or are too costly?

MR. HILLMAN: Not anymore. There used to be one, but I believe the State corrected it, with respect to the inspections of buildings where they were charging housing authorities fees for those inspections. I believe that practice has stopped; I haven't heard anymore about it. I know that the Trenton Housing Authority did pay the State of New Jersey its inspection fees, and then they adjusted it, but we never did get the money back. We should have fought you a little while longer, I guess. But, the answer to your question, Assemblyman, is "no." There really isn't anything as obvious to me as this particular smoke detector situation is.



ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: One of the things that this Committee can do is generate resolutions memorializing Congress, or the President, or whomever, to do certain things regarding Federal regulations which bind, limit, restrict and mandate matters concerning public housing. Is there anything presently pending on a Federal level that cries out for some sort of redress at this point, that we, as members of this Subcommittee, and as members of the State Legislature, can memorialize our Congress people to look into?

MR. HILLMAN: If the State were to take a position with respect to something that Carolyn Hammonds and this Committee has been discussing, namely the eviction loss, if the State were to address that and I know the difficulties involved with that-- The practicality of changing that might be very, very difficult, but if, for example, the State were to insert some kind of an amendment to the legislation on eviction laws, expanding them to drug abusers and/or those who were found guilty of unsanitary living -- that is another area I think ought to be side by side with the area of using drugs and causing the lives of young people to go astray. At the same time, I want to temper that remark with this. I believe if we can get greater funding for counseling in community service areas to help people understand, you know, what their responsibilities are, if we make efforts like that and still come up with those who insist that garbage can be thrown out the window or whatever, within their units, I think if the State were to take an action whereby those kinds of conditions were treated more quickly, the thing that the Federal government could do in concert with that, is eliminate what they now have in the way of a notice that must be given to a tenant. There is a requirement that a fourteen-day notice must be given to a tenant; this is not a State regulation, but rather a Federal regulation. For example, if they are delinquent in rent, they must have fourteen days in order to square that rent away before any action can be taken. This delays the eviction procedure. I kind of think that ought to be removed, I really do, because what we have-- Again, the intent is reversed. The idea of giving a person a fair warning and a chance to correct his wrong is not what is happening. The person is taking advantage of the fourteen-day letter to allow the delinquency to increase, and then he pays enough just to

continue. He becomes a constant delinquent, in other words. He is constantly running behind, and he is using the regulation to his advantage, rather than the regulation being used to be fair and square, so to speak.

In other words, if the State is going to be taking action concerning these laws, I think at the same time it could very aptly go to the Federal government and say, "You know, you could do some things too." In the area of that fourteen-day notice, I believe change is in order.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: On the Federal level, there is a requirement now. I don't quite know whether it is by a regulation from HUD, but I suppose so. It raises the income criteria for tenants from 25% to 30%. How is that going to impact on the Housing Authority of Trenton? Do you see anything positive, or anything extremely negative about that?

MR. HILLMAN: Well, in fairness, I see both. The positive standpoint of it is-- We are now out of the realm of the control of the State; we are going to have to go to a discussion of what the Federal government is doing. They are, in fact, saying they want to provide less subsidy to the authorities. The authorities' operating budgets are provided in two basic areas. The first subsidy is from the Federal government, and the second is rent from the tenants. So, in order to decrease the subsidy, they increase the rents. Now, perhaps rents should be increased in fairness, as they have been based on 25% of adjusted net income for quite some time. The Brook Amendment established that many years ago. Perhaps it is time to increase them. However, I do not believe it is proper to increase them when, in fact, you are reducing all other areas of subsidies to individuals in the way of public assistance. You are not providing adequate opportunities for them to secure employment so that they can meet this increase. They are on less of a fixed income, and are given a greater operating expense to deal with. There is the contradiction.

Maybe the Federal government needs to be made aware of this, but I don't know what we are going to be able to do to make them do anything about it.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Do you predict that is going to, with the related but ancillary problems that exist with unemployment, etc. -- do you think this increase in the percentage from 25% to 30% will have a negative impact in your rent collections, for example? I mean, now you are talking about 30% of someone's income, as opposed to 25%, and it seems to me that would automatically mean -- you might have had, let's say, a 10% late or delinquency rate at 25%, but at 30% it may increase to a larger number of rental delinquencies, thereby compounding and worsening a bad situation.

MR. HILLMAN: That is possible. As far as the Authority is concerned, Assemblyman, let me make this point too. The revenues we secure do not reduce our operating levels that much. Okay, they are reduced on subsidy, but they are increased on rents. In other words, we do need the money from some source, that is an absolute must. Also, realize the alternative that the individual in public housing has, as I think was mentioned in the testimony read from Milton Buck. When housing authorities were first developed, they were designed to give folks an opportunity to start off there and then move into their own housing, but with the climate today, it is fairly safe to assume that most of the people in public housing are going to stay in public housing. So, to come back to what I was saying now, the thought is, what are their alternatives? Even though the rent is going up, it is still the best deal in town. Where are they going to go? What are they going to do? I don't know that it is going to affect things that much for us. For them, yes; within their own households, yes. To get dramatic, less to eat, less to wear, less to sit on -- perhaps.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: There are Federal monies coming through. You have the subsidy monies to subsidize the 30% of the rent. There are also modernization monies coming down. What is not coming down for public housing, is money to build new public housing.

MR. HILLMAN: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: From your position as the Executive Director of the Trenton Housing Authority, what are your thoughts about that, I mean, the absence of new dollars for that? Is there a great need for it? I know we can't do anything about it here in the State, but what should the people in Washington be thinking about in that

regard? Is there a need for more public housing? I think I can answer that question, but I want to hear it from you.

MR. HILLMAN: Obviously, there is a need for more public housing. I reported earlier that I have a waiting list of somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500. The City of Trenton has 1,953 total units. About one-third of those are elderly units. The multi-family then would be about two-thirds. When I say we have a waiting list of 2,000 to 2,500, I can tell you safely that between 95% and 99% of those applications are multi-family, and not elderly. That is not to say there is not a need for the elderly, but it appears that the elderly, according to our applications-- Perhaps we are getting into other areas of other problems as to why they are not there, I don't know, but we don't have those applications. I am servicing elderly applications from this year's applications. In the area of two-bedroom units, I am servicing applications from the year 1976 or so. Three-bedroom applications are from 1971 and 1972, ten and eleven and more years back.

So, yes there is a need, but I think, as was touched on earlier also, somehow that need ought to be legislated, and I don't know what the effect of this recent Supreme Court ruling in Mount Laurel will mean. But, somehow it ought to be that those needs, if funds are going to be made available, ought to be such that it is not attractive for the low or low to middle-income to migrate to the city. It should be, in fact, available to them to live in public housing in the surrounding municipalities as well. Somehow, if that is to be done, I cannot believe that the existing authorities, for example, Trenton-- The Trenton Housing Authority is equipped, and the Federal government does provide for us to administer the development of any additional housing in the surrounding municipalities. To me, it is the most obvious, the most economical and the most practical way to do it. But, from a political standpoint, I don't know if it ever would be done that way. I don't know if it will ever be done, period.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: I have one question, although more of a statement than a question. You stated that the housing authorities can, if they choose to, have a tenant representative on the authority now, without any legislation.

MR. HILLMAN: That is correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: But, I think the difference in that is that now we don't have one only because it is not mandated. When you pass legislation, it is a mandated situation where they have to have it. That would make a difference.

MR. HILLMAN: Absolutely, that would be the difference. We could have one now, Assemblyman. The City Council needs only to have four of its seven members nominate and appoint a member to our Board. The State of New Jersey need only to use its appointive power, because the State appointment to the Housing Authority serves at the will of the State. This could be done tomorrow morning and, in fact, would satisfy that problem. The Mayor of the City of Trenton has the same power. What the legislation would do, obviously, is increase the number on the Board from seven to a greater number. The number seven for Trenton, in my opinion, is already large enough. However, if it were to be nine, my personal attitude is, so it's nine. There is no real problem with it.

I think the most practical way to address this would be from the existing appointing powers we have.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: My feeling about tenant representation is that if tenants are able to serve on the Board, they could at least be tougher than some of the Board members, because Ms. Hammonds, who was sitting here this morning, is very disturbed about a lot of things that are happening in her own situation, and could very well sit there with some very tough views on what should be and what shouldn't be. It would not be against your operation; it would be against those who are breaking the rules. I think that is the kind of information that is needed for your Commission.

MR. HILLMAN: It could be very worthwhile; there is no doubt about that. It depends on the individuals involved each time.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Especially with the consumer there being able to hold up the rights of others they represent. I am for mandating some legislation in this regard.

MR. HILLMAN: I know it did pass your group before, and I know you were very active in support of it. I believe it did pass the Senate as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Mr. Hillman, thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Martin, thank you for coming this morning.

MR. HILLMAN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: The next witness will be Qimmah Harris. How are you, Ms. Harris?

Q I M M A H D. H A R R I S: I'm fine, thank you. How are you, Assemblyman?

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Fine, thank you.

MS. HARRIS: I kind of narrowed down and focused in on some things when I got the understanding that the Committee was looking at what they could do on the State level. There are a lot of problems I can articulate about from personal experience. I don't know whether or not anyone would be interested in my views on how some of those might be remedied. I am going to go first with the testimony which focuses directly on the Federal regulation. I am speaking as a former tenant of Trenton City Housing, and voluntarily for those who are still residing in public housing, because I still go in and out, and I am quite aware of what is happening there.

One major problem I see with public housing in New Jersey, as well as in other states, is the Federal regulation which denies housing tenants the actual right to protect, maintain and preserve themselves and their families. Substandard housing, poorly maintained neighborhoods, unsafe conditions and lack of ample space are familiar complaints heard from housing tenants.

The Federal regulation presently does not recognize, foster or allow preservation of the family. For example, a family of four, under the Federal regulation, is allocated a two-bedroom unit. If it is a mother with three children, and she has two male children and one female child, the female child is required to sleep with the mother until the age of twelve. I think this denies the right to adult privacy, if not anything else. In any other civilized society, if I personally in a private residential area decide that I will sleep with my twelve year old daughter, I think I would be under suspicion for incest. I'm saying, this is a basic right that is denied only because you are limited to low-income housing. In contrast, I would imagine it would be the same requirement for a father with two female children and one male child.

I think this is a major problem, because it causes a lot of overcrowding. I think it is unreal to assume that an adult would want to -- if not totally necessary -- spend twelve years with a child. I don't know how healthy that is.

The Federal regulation also requires a sibling, after the age of eighteen, to leave the family, or the regulation will increase the rental fee if the youth remains in the home. Now, personally, I see this as a punitive measure which is not conducive to supporting the family concept -- of the family building and strengthening. America is built on families, so I know that collectively that is how families grow and move and are motivated to different levels. So, to separate families because a child reaches a certain age, or demand a rental increase from someone who is already limited or on a fixed income, seems to foster oppression, so to speak. It keeps people where they are. I see where youth could oftentimes reach back and help to support the family, and maybe enhance the whole family condition. You know, we could overcome some of the problems, which are many, in public housing.

If you read on in my testimony, you will see I went into my personal feelings about how I think the regulations offset any possibility of improving family conditions, because the regulations are so staunch they do not allow a family concept to even grow or be fostered. I see that as a real problem. I also think it is discriminatory, because if it was a private residence, no one could tell them that their child would have to leave the home because he was eighteen, or that their rent would increase if he did not, indeed, leave.

Lastly, the psychological impact on children who are deprived, I believe very much so -- and I have three children who experienced the environment in Trenton City Housing-- Personally, I come from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and I did not live in public housing there, although there was public housing. There is a major contrast between New Jersey public housing and Pennsylvania public housing. I think it is simply an attitudinal thing which is really responsible for how people are treated. We talked a lot here today about multi-family units. This is a terrible concept. In Harrisburg, initially they had a two-building complex which was sixteen floors.



They put families in there and tried it for a probationary period, and it didn't work. When it didn't work, they renovated it and put senior citizens in it. They then allowed families to have separate space.

Now, from a personal experience, I didn't live in a sixteen-story building, but I did live in a three-story building, which had nine apartments. There were from fifty to seventy-five people in that building. There were a lot of days I might have wanted to go outside and sit on my porch, but there was no porch for me. There was no space allocated, except what was inside, or the square footage of the unit. People cannot survive like that, herded together like cattle. It actually feels like that. It brings the whole morale of the people down. A lot of problems I hear coming across are being blamed on the victim, so to speak. I have lived in situations other than public housing, I have lived in public housing, and I have come out of public housing, so I can speak and incorporate the whole concept of what is happening here. I kind of felt chastised, even though it was supposed to be an advantage for me to be eligible for public housing. What was put across to me was, "Well, it is according to your income so it will be easy for you to manage." It was supposed to actually help me overcome, I would say, the poverty level, or being on a fixed income, being able to live and maintain my family on a minimal standard. I did not find that when I got there. I found some public housing to be substandard.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: I have a question about your reference to a regulation which requires that the rent be increased after a child reaches the age of eighteen and is out of school. Is that dependent upon some other circumstances?

MS. HARRIS: Eighteen and out of school.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Eighteen and out of school. Does that mean eighteen, out of school and working, or is it just eighteen and out of school?

MS. HARRIS: Eighteen and out of school. What happens is, we find a lot parents who cannot meet the increased rent. I don't think it is a bad idea for these kids to sign up and go into the Armed Forces, but I do not think it should be a forced situation.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: What would you recommend? Would you say the person could stay there -- to what period of time? Would your recommendation be in terms of maintaining the rental at the same level for "X" number of years after the person turns eighteen, or just how would you handle that in terms of correcting the regulation?

MS. HARRIS: I think consideration should be given to continuing education, perhaps if the child would like to go to college. It is punitive to increase the rent because your child is continuing his or her education and is able to work.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Does the regulation say that if the child is eighteen and in college the rent goes up?

MS. HARRIS: Well, if he or she is eighteen years of age and out of high school, and if he or she is employable and working, then the rent is adjusted, or they have to move. In other words, your siblings are no longer--

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Excuse me, let's hear from the Executive Director. I am fascinated by that regulation. That is something we ought to address specifically.

MR. HILLMAN: That is not 100% accurate, sir. The lady is speaking about a condition that does exist. If a person reaches -- and this is a Federal regulation -- the age of eighteen and is in school, they are continued in the calculation of the rent as a deduction. The deduction for each child is calculated at \$300.00. If the child reaches the age of eighteen and is not in school, the tenant is no longer entitled to the deduction of \$300.00 in the calculation of that rent. Therefore, the rent would increase, because the deductions were not as great as they were the year before. Again, this is Federally controlled. That is not something that we regulated, or whatever.

MS. HARRIS: My answer to that is to say--

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Wait a minute; I want to finish this. What does "not in school" mean? Does it mean secondary school, or does it mean--

MR. HILLMAN: College would be included as well, you know, junior college or college. If they are continuing their education after the age of eighteen, the Federal government allows us to calculate the rent of that family with the \$300.00 deduction for that child.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: As soon as the child, or the young person turns eighteen and is not in school, then what?

MR. HILLMAN: Then the calculation of the rent for that family will not include the \$300.00 deduction for that child.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: And, suppose the young person is working now and is still living in the same public housing apartment? He is working; he is above eighteen, he is out of school and he is working?

MR. HILLMAN: Rent is calculated on the income from all members of the family, so his income would be included in the family income as the calculation in the formula is computed. If he were not working, and were not on public assistance, then it would not add to the income of the family. However, it would not -- if it comes out to what it comes out to-- In other words, it is built into a fixed structure for computation. There is no judgment or discretion that we are allowed to use. That is a Federal regulation.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: What is your feeling about Ms. Harris' concern? I see a lot of substance to the idea that maybe if you allowed a young person who is over eighteen to work, but remain there, and not penalize the family, that might increase the overall quality of life for the family, or it might even enable them to move out eventually, to accumulate the down payment you need for a house.

MR. HILLMAN: It would, but the system is not designed to provide for that.

MS. HARRIS: That I must agree with. At one point I was a welfare recipient, and my income was based on that. As I went to work, my income was based on my gross, which I always thought was totally unfair, because you never see your gross. Sometimes your gross can be \$200.00 different than your net, and why base it on money I do not see? Coupled with that, from the time I moved in until the time I moved out, my rent must have at least quadrupled, but I never saw any more space or any improved environmental conditions.

My biggest concern is the children who grow up in that kind of an environment. Because of these staunch Federal regulations, and because you are a low-income family, you seem to be deprived of just human rights, just humane and equitable treatment. They stick people

together under conditions that oftentimes they cannot control. One personal experience I had was, in my particular housing unit, we had uncontrollable heat, I mean heat so uncontrollable that it was unhealthy. We had babies burned severely from just brushing up against a radiator. Then, there were some units that had no heat at all. That has to do with poor maintenance; that has to do with a gambit of problems.

What I'm saying is, if I can move myself along economically, I should be able to see a change. When my conditions do not change, it seems to indicate that the system is perpetuating itself to keep me there.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: You are caught up in the system.

MS. HARRIS: It keeps me there, so that I can't get out. It is hard to save and to live, if you are on a fixed income anyway. So, I was aware when I prepared this statement that the Committee was asking what New Jersey could do to improve public housing in the State. I am suggesting that some serious consideration be given to the development of some legislation which would memorialize Congress to act on amending Federal regulations, those regulations which deny fair, humane and equitable treatment of low-income families in public housing. That is broad to say, but we can clearly see how some regulations somewhat foster oppression. It's that simple.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: I think the regulation you made reference to that has to do with rents being affected by young people turning eighteen and staying there is something we should focus on. Thought should be given to whether or not that could be amended to effect a fair and better situation for the housing authority, for the tenants and for everyone else. I believe that is an area we will ask for some research on to see whether or not we can come up with something specific in terms of memorializing a resolution.

MS. HARRIS: I would also like to speak about the subsidy. I am not presently in the Lincoln Housing, so I am not as aware of what is happening. Mr. Hillman was here speaking about the subsidy and how it could be punitive to the family, and maybe what the State could do to help offset that. I also see a possibility that predominantly people who live in low-income housing are welfare recipients. We know

that welfare has not increased its allocations in twenty-five years. Inflation has increased 200%, where welfare benefits have not. So, maybe the State may want to take a stand or a position on asking that allocations reflect cost of living increases.

On the issue of commissioners -- housing authority commissioners who sit on the Board, I would also support having tenant representation, I don't think only to articulate problems, but to participate in decision making. This takes me to the lexon windows they put in just prior to my leaving the Wilson-Haverstick Homes. I was aware of a fire that occurred in Newark where they had lexon windows and the firemen couldn't get in. Of course, they couldn't get the children out, so they had five children die. I was very concerned on the day they came to take my windows out and put the lexon windows in. I wondered who made this decision, and how much research was done. I was personally concerned, not only as a parent, but as a tenant living in a neighborhood. I would not want to see anybody next door to me going up in flames, with no one able to get in, and no one able to get out. I was concerned that those windows were put in, and that that decision was made, and I was totally appalled by the contractors.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Are they the same identical kind of windows that they had in Newark?

MS. HARRIS: Well, lexon windows are lexon windows. That is just a material that is used which is nonbreakable, but it is combustible.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: May I just ask the Director a question. Has this been looked into?

MR. HILLMAN: I know what the witness is talking about. The windows on the lower levels have been damaged severely, and the expense for replacing them has increased to a point to where the Federal government approved the concept of putting lexon, or unbreakable glass, on the lower levels of structures. I think that is probably how it came to be. I don't know how unsafe that makes the inside of the unit though, Assemblyman. We have had lexon windows busted out in some cases. I think if it were a fire company trying to get in or whatever, they could get through it I'm sure. What it does do is protect the

unit from vandalism; that is what it was designed to do. Whether or not it is doing that completely is another question, but that is what it was designed to do.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: Thank you.

MS. HARRIS: There was an incident in Newark where five children burned to death because firemen could not get in through the lexon windows. They could not get in, and the children could not get out. At 400 degrees Fahrenheit they are combustible. I know about lexon windows. I was totally frightened when they started to put them in. I lived on the second floor, by the way, so I do not consider that a lower level. They did the whole complex; everybody got lexon windows in the whole complex. I was not only annoyed with the windows, it was the contractor, the contracting agency. I thought that if tenant representation had been incorporated in the decision making, maybe there would have been more consideration given. What happened was, they contracted to put these lexon windows in with storm windows. Now, here I am a housing tenant and I am already on a limited income. I'm working though, and I'm trying to maintain and come above. They came in one morning with the lexon windows, crowbars and sledge hammers, in today's technology. They then went about beating out my windows with sledge hammers and crowbars. Shattered glass was everywhere. Now, you tell me how much self pride I should have for my property, when I try to maintain it, and these contractors came in-- They were not contracted out to do any finishing work and they left big holes, I mean gouges, where you could see all the way to the brick, in my ceiling and in my walls. So, I went over to the manager and I said to her, "I'm really not satisfied with what happened." First of all, it took me three or four weeks to clean up the glass. They actually came in and bent the window frames with crowbars and sledge hammers. I think that is just barbaric. If you treat people like that, they will begin to act like that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: You are suggesting then that management should develop some sensitivity to the rights of the tenants, and to the quality of their lives? I think that is a recommendation, obviously, that the management authorities have to be made aware of. I think part of our findings will uncover, to the extent it is

appropriate, recommendations along those lines. Basically, we are not going to cover specific management problems in detail. I think we might identify them as areas of concern, but they are things that are more local and Federal matters, than for the State to be involved in specific housing authorities and what they do or don't do in the way of discharging their functions.

MS. HARRIS: I think there could be a charter developed by the State Legislature to spell out certain rights to low-income families. I think that that could be the initiative taken by this Legislature. I also believe there could be some criteria developed that says, "In New Jersey, we will not accept high-rise multi-family units for low-income housing." I also think there could be legislation which says, "Congress needs to feel the heartbeat of New Jersey, and know that in New Jersey public housing is not working. A lot of it is largely due to Federal regulation, which needs to be amended so that it really services, maintains and aids families." As it presently is, it does not do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: I think your one concern about high-rise apartments and the fact that the State of New Jersey should take a position against high-rise multi-unit dwellings is, it is reflective really of the consensus of opinion now. I think it has been universally agreed that high-rise living just doesn't work for family-size units. We are not really too bothered with this issue at this time, because there is no money for the building of any new public housing. I think when the money is returned, and I hope it will be for the construction of new public housing units, I do not believe you will see the kinds of high-rises that were built during the '50's and '60's. I think it is commonly agreed that that just doesn't work for family units -- that design just doesn't work. I don't think you'll ever see that again.

Your suggestion about an attempt to articulate the rights of public housing tenants is something that is worthy of some consideration. After you leave here you might think about it, and submit something to John Lee concerning your suggestions. I don't know whether they will lend themselves to developing any kind of regulation or policy, but your ideas along that line will be welcome.



MS. HARRIS: I think there should be a charter, and anything that jeopardises the responsibility of that charter should automatically be nixed. I mean, things like--

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Just submit your suggestions to John Lee, and we will take it from there. If we have further need to explore them, we will do that. Okay?

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: I think your testimony has been excellent, Ms. Harris, and we were happy to have you here this morning. I have just one question before you leave. When you say, "All cement and no recreation causes a lot of problems" -- I had the opportunity of going through the Kingsbury Complex about three or four years ago, when they had some problems there with vandalism. I went all through the buildings and saw the holes punched through the ceilings, things ripped off the walls, etc. Then I looked in that complex and saw all that cement. There were no tennis courts, no basketball courts, nothing at all for recreation, and the only way those youngsters could let off steam was to vandalize. I think when we plan new housing, we should always plan space for recreation.

MS. HARRIS: We need space; people need room.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: You're absolutely right.

MS. HARRIS: They need room. When you couple them all on top of each other they begin to rebel. They want to break the barriers.

ASSEMBLYMAN WATSON: You're absolutely right. I am just happy to have had you here this morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Thank you very much, Ms. Harris.

MS. HARRIS: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN CHARLES: Are there any other persons in the audience who wish to give statements? (no response) If not, we will adjourn the hearing before this Subcommittee on Public Housing until the next time. Thank you.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

REPORT ON  
REPAIR AND REHABILITATION OF  
PUBLIC HOUSING  
IN NEWARK

TO: MAYOR KENNETH A. GIBSON

FROM: THE NEWARK REDEVELOPMENT  
AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

MILTON A. BUCK  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

January 18, 1983

REPORT TO THE MAYOR

This Authority has stated publicly on many occasions its recognition that there are all too many instances in public housing of substandard living conditions, inadequate facilities, threats to the security of tenants, and conditions which impact on the health of the residents. We have stated also, with detailed documentation, that these conditions arise basically from some of the following reasons:

- \* Inadequate operating and capital funding from the federal government, which has been, and will remain, the major single source of funds to cover the deficits incurred in the operation of public housing. These funding inadequacies prevent us from buying the materials we need, and from hiring the personnel we must have, if we are to do properly the job of operating public housing, and correcting its many deficiencies.
- \* Age of the buildings. Newark's public housing stock is aging. Of our 12,880 units, more than 10,000 are over 20 years old. More than 7,000 are over 25. Nearly 2,700 are age 40 or over. This means that equipment failure and general decline which raise the need for repairs occur at a greater rate, making the burden of trying to keep up with the job that much heavier.

- \* Vandalism. The impact of rampant vandalism is inescapable. It is found in the form of window breaking, elevator failures, the breakdown of garbage systems, lighting failures which endanger tenants, and the simple creation of an environment which is repugnant to the desire of the majority of residents for a decent living situation.
- \* Non-payment of rents. The serious financial condition of the Authority is further crippled by the failure of a large number of tenants to pay the rent that is due for their apartments.

(Some criticism stems from the fact that this Authority, in accordance with the desires of the responsible federal agencies, has taken steps to draft a more equitable lease agreement between the Authority and its tenants. It does not contain the provisions necessary to insure that tenants live up to their rental obligations. It also has other shortcomings, and we are seeking to correct them.

Some tenants have brought pressure in an effort to prevent us from correcting these shortcomings.

A subsequent report to the Mayor will go into detail on this subject.)

Each one of the areas cited above provides grounds for broad discussion and widely differing points of view, both as to the reason for their existence and how they should be solved. The unavoidable fact, however, is that conditions in public housing are not good, and there are compelling reasons why this is so.

It is one thing to recognize the extent and severity of these problems. It is quite another matter to take the facts associated with these conditions and to translate it all into a claim that the Authority is doing nothing, or has done nothing, to attempt to alleviate the plight of the residents.

The record, a portion of which is covered in this report, clearly shows otherwise. A major sum of money has been spent by this Authority to try to correct the continuing and growing problems which were cited above. Despite severe staff reductions, necessitated by the previously mentioned financial squeeze, those employees who continue with the Authority have made numerous, extensive efforts to use the resources available to improve conditions, and to lessen the degree of deterioration in public housing. They have sought to insure the provision of heat, to modernize at those locations most sorely in need of such treatment, to provide some measure of security for tenants, to correct unsightly or unsanitary garbage disposal problems, to replace the incredible volume of broken windows and light bulbs, and to get the always malfunctioning elevators running again. In other words, they are doing their best, against great odds, to try to make public housing work.

There have been public claims to the contrary. Some of those claims have emanated from tenant sources. Most of those come from tenants who are understandably angry over subpar conditions.

The claims that the Authority has failed to do what it can to improve conditions, however, are in direct contradiction of the detailed, documentable records.

This report is the first in a series which the Authority is submitting to the Mayor detailing what the Authority has done in recent years in its program to combat deterioration and to improve living conditions for public housing residents.

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New Jersey State Library

## I. THE MOD PROGRAM

MOD is the short reference to the Public Housing Modernization program funded by the federal government through HUD. The purpose of the program is to attempt, through an infusion of funds over and above regular HUD subsidies, to upgrade public housing where decline and deterioration has occurred. MOD was the federal government's first and only capital improvement program for the nation's public housing. Essentially, public housing was without any capital improvement program for about 30 years. Obviously MOD is of particular importance to a program such as ours.

Since the beginning of the MOD program in 1967 the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority has received over \$75 million in MOD funds.

The total amount might seem extensive. It is better understood, however, in this context:

1. Newark has 12,880 public housing units, 28 percent of the total number in New Jersey.
2. Newark generally has the oldest public housing units in New Jersey, and, by many thousands, the most high rise public housing units.
3. In 1982, about \$80 million in federal MOD funds was allocated to New Jersey. Less than 14 percent of that went to Newark, despite Newark's possession of 28 percent of the total number of units in the state.

Nevertheless, this Authority has sought to do everything possible with those available MOD funds. The claim that the Authority has spent millions in MOD money, and has little to show for it, is rhetoric, and a false picture of what really has happened.

Here is a summary of Newark's MOD-funded projects which have been completed, since June, 1980, or are now in progress:

- \* Roofs have been replaced on 65 buildings at Columbus Homes, Scudder Homes, Kretchmer Homes, Hayes Homes, Seth Boyden Court and Hyatt Court.

Cost: \$5 million

- \* Heating plant equipment has been replaced or upgraded at Columbus Homes, Bradley Court, Stephen Crane Village, Hyatt Court, Roosevelt Homes, Seth Boyden Court and Kretchmer Homes.

Cost: \$11 million



- \* Work on sewer facilities, in some instances involving major improvements, in others a cleaning of the system, has been done or is in progress at Columbus Homes, Scudder Homes, Hayes Homes, Felix Fuld Homes, Hyatt Court, Stephen Crane Village, Pennington Court, Roosevelt Homes, Kretchmer Homes and Bradley Court.

Cost: \$1 million

- \* Electrical equipment has been upgraded at Scudder Homes and Pennington Court, and is in progress at Stephen Crane Village.

Cost: \$2 million

- \* Entry doors have been replaced, and all apartment doors given reinforcement against possible forced entry, at Bradley Court.

Cost: \$100,000

- \* Major improvements and repairs to 36 elevator cars and their controls have been accomplished at Scudder Homes Elderly (4) and are in progress at Hayes Homes (32).

Cost: \$400,000

- \* New ground floor entries and security system are being installed at Scudder Homes for the Elderly. Also, a new housing police substation has been installed.

Cost: \$800,000

- \* General work encompassing security needs, apartment refurbishings and mechanical and electrical improvements is in progress at Scudder Homes for the Elderly. New aluminum, double glazed energy efficient windows were installed.

Cost: \$2 million

- \* Correction of land settlement conditions, and their impact on sewer equipment, was accomplished at Stephen Crane Village.

Cost: \$800,000

- \* Interior water standpipe equipment for fire protection at Columbus Homes is about to be replaced, or in some locations, repaired.

Cost: \$350,000

- \* New aluminum siding was installed and securing of existing siding is in progress on 27 scatter-site housing/low rise buildings on High Street.

Cost: \$200,000

- \* General improvements were completed in community rooms and to social service facilities at Scudder Homes and Hayes Homes.

Cost: \$350,000

- \* Replacement of 3,000 windows (aluminum, double glazed, energy-efficient) at Kretchmer and Seth Boyden Homes for the Elderly.

Cost: \$800,000

- \* General refurbishment of apartments, improvement of security fences, repair of walkways, and the sealing and closing of two buildings at Scudder Homes.

Cost: \$500,000

- \* Repair of the deteriorated gas distribution system has been started at Walsh Homes.

Cost: \$600,000

- \* A Little League baseball field was improved on property at Scudder Homes.

Cost: \$ 50,000  
\$25,950,000

In addition, \$500,000 in MOD funds was allocated in partial payment for the work of the Ehrenkrantz Group of New York, which is making a full study of all public housing facilities in Newark and will draw plans for further upgrading.

MOD CONSTRUCTION COST: \$25,600,000

Special dust to dawn outdoor lighting is being installed to provide better security at Columbus Homes and Hayes Homes. This equipment is rented at an annual cost of \$30,000.

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In related work, this Authority has utilized Housing and Community Development action grants through the City and from federal sources, to accomplish the following, also since June, 1980:

- \* New roofing improvements to the community building at Columbus Homes.
- \* Walkways at Columbus Homes.
- \* Lobby weather protection at Stella Wright Homes.

- \* New roof on community building at Scudder Homes.
- \* Improvement and expansion of Soul-O-House, the drug rehabilitation facility at Scudder Homes.
- \* Corrections and improvements to garbage and trash disposal systems at all low rise projects. (In the main, the replacement of non-functioning garbage compactors with dumpsters.)

Approximate Cost: \$500,000

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It must be recognized that all of the projects cited above represent extensive undertakings challenging the limited resources of this agency. They also have required the professional response of the members of the Authority staff, at all levels.

## II. EMERGENCY HEATING PROGRAM

Of all the facilities which are integral to a housing complex, none is more basic than its heating system, and none is more costly to repair.

Given sufficient time, and depending on the initial quality of construction, eventual decline of such a system is inevitable. Newark's public housing system, with its preponderance of older units, is experiencing extensive problems due to the decline of its heating system.

As listed in the MOD section of this report, extensive upgrading work has been done under the MOD program on the heating systems of Columbus Homes, Bradley Court, Stephen Crane Village, Hyatt Court, Roosevelt Homes, Seth Boyden Court and Kretchmer Homes. The cost of the heating system work done under MOD over the years is about \$11 million.

The true extent of our problems in this area is emphasized by the fact that our insurers, for safety reasons, have required the shut-down of certain boilers at Baxter Terrace, and the Kretchmer Homes. State authorities initially refused to grant certificates of operation, or granted only conditional certification to operate, for certain equipment at the Walsh Homes, the Stella Wright Homes, the Scudder Homes and the Kretchmer and Boyden Homes for the elderly. Corrective action has been taken.

All of this has constituted a heating emergency, and we have undertaken an emergency effort to meet the situation, all beyond the MOD-funded work on heating systems.

The work now in progress will require an estimated expenditure of \$1,904,000. As much as \$2 million more may be required to complete the job.

That money must come from regular operating subsidies, thus depleting resources for other worthy purposes.

The detail of this emergency heating work follows:

BOILER WORK EMERGENCY COMPLETED TO DATE

- Project N.J. 2-5      James W. Baxter Terrace
- Located and repaired underground steam leak and leaking condensate return lines, refurbished all F & T traps, on the Northwest quadrant part of the project, temporary heating plant installed on project site currently supplying heat and hot water to the project.
- Project N.J. 2-6      Stephen Crane Village
- Leaky fire tubes at boiler #2. Adjustment and tune-up of system. Repairs to leaky ancilliary equipment. Repairs to domestic hot water generator and deaerators. Repair and replace steam traps.
- Project N.J. 2-7      John W. Hyatt Court
- Repairs to boiler #9 and to malfunctioning gas valve at boiler #3. All twelve (12) boilers adjusted and tuned-up.
- Project N.J. 2-9      F.D. Roosevelt Homes
- Repairs to hot water make-up tank at Building #2 and leaky hot water tank at Building #6. Repairs and adjustments for flame failure for hot water heater at Building #8. All automatic timers malfunctioning and require replacement and/or adjustments.
- Project N.J. 2-10      Otto E. Kretchmer Homes
- Re-trapped all incoming and outgoing steam mains in all buildings, installed new traps on all domestic hot water heaters, installed sump pumps in various steam pits throughout the basements, cleared obstruction in underground steam main feeding Building #4, removed defective sectioning valve. (Under separate contract this boiler plant currently is being refurbished).

Project N.J. 2-11

Thomas J. Walsh Homes

Worked on all four (4) boilers inclusive of interior refractory work, replacement of boiler plate sections, complete re-tubing of two (2) boilers, replaced stay bolts in conjunction with replacement of boiler plates, replacement of hand holes and man holes on three (3) boilers, cleared up obstruction in underground steam mains.

Project N.J. 2-17

Otto E. Kretchmer Elderly

Re-wired low water cut offs on boiler water feed system.

Project N.J. 2-21A

Otto E. Kretchmer Elderly

Worked on all four (4) boilers inclusive of new mud legs on all four (4) boilers, including inner and outer shell at the base of all boilers, installation of all hand holes on three (3) boilers. All new interior refractory floors on all four (4) boilers, replaced all blow down and water column piping, re-built and refurbished all four burners and replaced all burner controls and amplifiers. Repaired leak in condensate return tank and replaced make up water control and replaced one (1) oil pump. Replaced condensate piping in all building equipment areas and refurbished traps in all basements and equipment areas. The supplying of heat and hot water is by emergency heating boilers for duration of boiler repair work.

Project N.J. 2-21E

Seth Boyden Elderly

Worked on all four (4) boilers inclusive of new mud legs on all four (4) boilers, including inner and outer shell at the base of all boilers, installation of all hand holes on three (3) boilers. All new interior refractory floors on all four (4) boilers, replaced all blow down and water column piping, re-built and refurbished all four (4) burners. Replaced condensate piping in all building equipment areas and refurbished traps in all basements and equipment areas. Total replacement of all underground steam and condensate piping inclusive of sectioning valve stations and new man holes, and all related pipe insulation. Also installed new condensate pumps, traps and related piping in conjunction with underground steam lines. The supplying of heat and hot water is by emergency heating boilers for duration of boiler repair work.

Project N.J. 2-21F Seth Boyden Elderly

Worked on all three (3) boilers inclusive of new mud legs on all three (3) boilers, including inner and outer shell at the base of all boilers, installation of all hand holes on three boilers. Replaced condensate piping in all building equipment areas and refurbished traps in all basements and equipment areas. All new interior refractory floors on all three (3) boilers, replaced all blow down and water column piping, re-built and refurbished all three (3) burners.

WORK TO BE COMPLETED UNDER BOILER EMERGENCY

Project N.J. 2-12 Hayes Homes

Work required on all six (6) boilers. Work inclusive of replacement of mud legs and inner and outer shell and stay bolts, interior refractory work, repair or replace exterior brick boiler bases, replace three (3) man holes with rings, and replace safety valves as required.

Project N.J. 2-15 Stella Wright Homes

Work required on all four (4) boilers inclusive of interior refractory work, all boilers, re-gasket doors on all boilers, refurbish boiler feed water system and install balancing lines between the boilers and re-wire one (1) complete burner, hydro test all boilers.

Project N.J. 2-19 Scudder Homes

Work on all six (6) boilers inclusive of interior refractory work and replacement of all rear doors, completely re-tube #1 boiler, hydro test all boilers, make repairs to induction fans, refurbish all soot blowers. Installation of all new injectors, installaion of all automatic boiler water feed valves.

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THE SOUL-O-HOUSE PROGRAM

A Report to Mayor Gibson

from

The Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority

March 7, 1983

In keeping with its commitment to report to the Mayor of Newark on its achievements in its various areas of responsibility, the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority submits this report on the progress of Soul-O-House, the anti-drug use and rehabilitation program based at Scudder Homes.

\* \* \* \* \*

In its long involvement with the whole array of social problems which beset today's central cities, the Newark Housing Authority has dealt with few that have afforded it the satisfying sense of accomplishment that it has derived from its connection with Soul-O-House.

Soul-O-House is, in fact, an independent organization under the executive leadership of its director, Edna Thomas. The Authority, however has sought to further the objectives and the program of Soul-O-House in every way possible, consistent with its own budget limitations and the regulations covering permissible involvement in outside programs.

The results of this association are now showing in a way that demonstrate that Soul-O-House, with the help of the Authority, can have a lasting and profound impact on the drug problem at the city's public housing projects, and throughout the entire city.

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Mrs. Thomas was an ex-Housing Authority employee when she founded Soul-O-House in 1973. With the encouragement of the Authority, she established Soul-O-House in space allotted for the purpose at the Scudder Homes. Initially it was in two shared rooms, assigned from a converted apartment. Today Soul-O-House utilizes ten rooms at Scudder.

The basic approach of Soul-O-House is to take young people who have a demonstrated drug problem, to help them work themselves through the problem, and to bring them back to a state of non-addiction, and a constructive place in society. Young people normally get into the program either by referral from another agency, or at the suggestion of some court or other judicial authority where it has been determined that the person has a drug problem, but that the youth has a willingness to try to overcome it.

Over the last year, and as a result of the stepped-up involvement of the Redevelopment and Housing Authority, the Soul-O-House program has grown to over 185 enrollees from a prior level of 125. Most, but not all, of the enrollees are residents of public housing.

A special aspect of this program is the work adjustment project, under which about 40 young people are given the opportunity to combine work and counseling. Those who are participants in that program normally arrive at the Soul-O-House Center at Scudder Homes sometime around 8:00 a.m., prepared to

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put in a full day's work. Work is the real key to this particular program. It is based on the premise that given an opportunity to work, a young person with a drug problem acquires a new and better reason to kick the habit. Work is employed in the program as a therapy. It is normally done during four days of a five day week for an enrollee in Soul-O-House.

The fifth day is also a work day, or is given over to counseling.

The young persons in the program also are required to submit a urinalysis test each week as a means of insuring that they are remaining away from drugs.

Those in the work program work at jobs made available by the Housing Authority. For this they are paid \$4 per hour. A basic purpose in providing the payments is to give the young persons who are enrolled a better means of escaping from the drug cycle. The stipend which they are paid is intended to insure that they will have some means of paying carfare, buying work clothes, and paying court fines and other legal costs that may have arisen from their involvement with drugs. It is also intended to help them obtain the basic necessities for living.

It has been the experience of the Authority that the great majority of young people who work in this work program do so with much vigor and conscientiousness. Among their achievements over the last year has been the replacement of some 20,000 broken window panes found among all of the Authority's 23 projects in

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New Jersey State Library

the City. (Since November the Soul-O-House crews have been installing Plexiglass in place of standard glass as the Authority has sought ways to reduce damage from vandalism.)

Other jobs filled are light painting and interior work on apartments, repair of damage caused by vandalism to mailboxes and other objects, removal of worn out stoves, refrigerators and furniture, and some janitorial activities.

Beyond the success achieved by the program in taking young people out of the drug cycle, a number of the youths have emerged from the program sufficiently trained as workers to gain steady employment on the open market. A few whose successful entry into the job market is known about include:

An individual working for a painting contractor.

A regular driver for a Newark City agency.

A Newark City fireman.

An employee of a job contractor operating in Newark.

An enlisted man in the U.S. Navy.

An employee of parcel post.

Beyond that, three persons who are products of the program now are students at Essex County College. Many who have come through the program have come off the welfare rolls as a result of the experience.

The success of this program and its recent expansion has attracted the attention of the Federal Department of Housing and

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Urban Development (HUD) which is studying the possibility of establishing similar programs at public housing projects in other major cities.

It is the intention of the Authority to continue this program and, if possible in the face of its own severe financial limitations, to expand it.

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