

Testimony of David Gardner, January 31, 2020
Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization Public Oversight Round Table
On DC Authority's Transformational Plan

Committee on Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization Chair Bonds, members of the Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is David Gardner. I am a member of the People for Fairness Coalition (PFFC). I am a recipient of a DCHA voucher and I worked at a DCHA property.

This testimony from me today comes with great concern. DCHA housing properties are in great need of repairs, from falling bannisters to cracks in the walls. My main issue has become the drugs and violence which has engulfed these communities to a point of a death trap if you walk through them.

Today I would like to address two topics: my experience based on my knowledge of DCHA; and issues raise by advocates regarding the Transformational Plan which is the topic of today's roundtable.

Perspectives from my personal experience

Growing up and having to live in a society of such distress. Oftentimes I would visit DC public housing properties that had been overrun by drug dealers, 50 – 60 drug dealers occupying these properties, running them at their own will. While working at Sibley Plaza, a DCHA property, between 2013 and 2014 I found residents that didn't pay their rent. This did not surprise me because I wouldn't pay nobody to have people being killed on my front steps.

But there were positive parts of my work at the Sibley Plaza apartments. The property manager I worked with was a very nice person. We had people come to our office to pay their rent and they were welcomed and respected. They just want someone to help them. People know the difference.

Concerns among advocates

I am not an expert on the Transformational Plan. But I know that there are several advocates here today that are. And I understand that they have some big concerns.

- One concern is whether residents will be able to return once the new structure is built.
- Another is will there be enough apartments for all of the residents that had to leave?
- I understand that under the Transformational Plan most apartments will be one and two bedrooms with some three bedroom apartments. For those who lived in three or four apartments before they left will there be enough three and four bedroom apartments to move back into?
- I also understand that while the new structure is being built former residents will receive vouchers. With the money in the vouchers will they be able to find a decent place that is nearby? Among others, many have children in nearby schools and they should be able to continue going to the same schools.
- Will crime go down as a result of building the new apartment complexes?
- Will the complexes have staff who are able to interact with low income residents and give them the respect and support that they need?

In closing I'm for new changes and new developments. But I would like to see a better, safer DC for the years to come.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.