

FROM THE FIELD

Delaware Housing Coalition Holds Teach-In and Lobby Day

The Delaware Housing Coalition (DHC), an NLIHC state partner, held its annual “Day for Housing” in the state capital, Dover, on May 11. The day began with an “Affordable Housing Teach-In” attended by more than 120 people including grassroots citizens, housing advocates, nonprofit housing providers, service providers, public officials, and bankers.

The teach-in featured people describing five unique housing situations illustrative of some of the affordable housing problems that exist in Delaware. A disabled tenant spoke about how she fought to prevent her project-based Section 8 building from opting out of the program, saving the affordable homes for her and other tenants, and eventually using her Section 8 voucher to become a homeowner. A representative for a disabled individual who owned a manufactured home, but rented the land on which it was located, related how that individual is now living in public housing because she was evicted when the park owner decided to use it for another purpose. An advocate for people who are cognitively challenged described the difficulties individuals encounter trying to secure housing and access public transportation. A homeownership counselor spoke about the tribulations of families in foreclosure. And a nonprofit director and a community leader discussed the housing needs of people with HIV/AIDS.

Each speaker answered three questions:

- What are the challenges you have faced in trying to get or keep affordable housing?
- What does Delaware need to do to make affordable housing more available, and to make people more secure in their homes?
- Stereotypes are often used as a way of saying that people are less deserving of help and support. Considering the people you represent, what is the one thing you would most like to never hear said about your group?

Another key component of the day was release of *Who Can Afford to Live in Delaware? 2010*, a 30-page review of the nature and extent of the full spectrum of affordable housing issues in the state. Each Delaware state legislator will get a copy of the report, which includes many suggestions for addressing these and other problems. Recommendations include:

- Addressing homelessness, disability, and aging in a community setting by relying on a home as the base for recovery for as many people as possible.

- Crafting a state rental assistance program based on the Step Up housing voucher program, moving it toward an expanded and permanent rental assistance program. (The Step Up program provides supportive services to foster children who are aging out of the system.)
- Establishing a state “source of income” discrimination statute that would make voucher holders a protected class in the state’s fair housing laws.
- Requiring a minimum amount (perhaps 30%) of the state’s Housing Development Fund (similar to a housing trust fund) to be targeted to those with extremely low incomes.
- Providing fewer but better targeted and financed units, instead of producing more units that do not reach those with the greatest needs.
- Mandating the spirit and much of the letter of Universal Design principles as part of publicly financed affordable housing production. (Universal Design is an approach to the design of all products and environments to be as usable as possible by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability, or situation.)
- Adding to the state’s Low Income Housing Tax Credit program Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) a requirement that a minimum percentage of assisted units be affordable to extremely low income households.
- Adding strong incentives or mandatory set asides in the QAP that distribute assisted units equitably throughout all communities.
- Establishing state and local policies that work to achieve a “fair share” of every form of affordable housing to be borne across all communities.
- Establishing state and local policies that promote housing which offers people of all incomes access and choice to schools, transportation, and employment.
- Creating inclusionary housing programs that require a balance of rental housing affordable to those with the lowest incomes.
- Passing a right-to-purchase provision that allows local housing nonprofits and public agencies to acquire and preserve affordable units.

DHC worked with other housing groups in Delaware to convince Governor Jack Markell (D) to propose an \$8.5 million budget for the state’s housing programs, an amount exceeding that requested by the Delaware State Housing Authority. Consequently, the Housing Development Fund would receive \$4 million and \$4.5 million would go for increased housing

preservation through the Bond Bill for capital improvements. A key aim of DHC's lobby day activity was to convince legislators to support this \$8.5 million budget proposal. Participants were also reminded to contact Delaware's Congressional delegation to urge the capitalization of the National Housing Trust Fund (see article elsewhere in Memo).

"In keeping with DHC's mission to foster the growth and long-term flourishing of grassroots constituencies, we invited these grassroots leaders to share their experience and insights with the group so we might gain a first-hand perspective of the ongoing struggle for basic shelter experienced by them and so many others," said Lorraine de Meurisse, president of the DHC board. "We are grateful to each for sharing their wisdom and have redoubled our commitment to working for safe, accessible and affordable housing for all."

Who Can Afford to Live in Delaware? 2010 is available at: http://www.housingforall.org/WhoCanAfford2010_online_0515.pdf

For more information: Gina Miserendino, Grassroots Policy Specialist, Delaware Housing Coalition, grassroots@housingforall.org

EVENTS

Webinar on the FY11 Federal Budget Scheduled

PolicyLink and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities will jointly host a webinar on ensuring that Congress's FY11 budget helps low income people, working families, and communities of color. The webinar will provide an update on the Congressional budgeting process and maneuvering, share PolicyLink's analysis of equity in the budget, and give participants tools to advocate for an equitable FY11 budget.

The interactive webinar will be held on June 3 at 1 pm ET.

NLIHC NEWS

NLIHC Welcomes New Interns

Lauren Ross has joined NLIHC as a research intern. Lauren has a master's degree in urban sociology from George Washington University and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in sociology at Temple University in Philadelphia, where she is focusing on low income housing and urban redevelopment. Lauren's previous experiences include interning at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies.

Jason Terrell has joined NLIHC as a summer outreach intern. Jason is an Atlanta native and recently finished his sophomore year at Furman University in Greenville, SC. His interest in affordable housing largely stems from his involvement with various organizations on his campus like the NAACP and the National Urban League. Jason plans to graduate in the spring of 2012 with a dual bachelor's degree in political science and philosophy.

NLIHC Seeking Fall Interns

NLIHC is now accepting resumes for Fall 2010 intern positions. Interns are highly valued and fully integrated into the staff work of NLIHC. We seek students passionate about social justice issues, with excellent writing and interpersonal skills. The positions available are:

Communications Intern. Assists in the planning of NLIHC's annual media awards, the preparation and distribution of press materials, and on website and social media networking projects. Also responsible for daily maintenance of the media database and the tracking of press hits.

Policy Intern. Tracks new legislation, attends and summarizes Congressional hearings for weekly newsletter, participates in visits to Congressional offices and develops materials for use in lobbying the House and Senate to accomplish NLIHC's mission. Updates the Congressional database.

Outreach Intern. Assists with grassroots organizing efforts for the National Housing Trust Fund Campaign and other legislative campaigns. Assists with membership recruitment/retention efforts and internal database upkeep.

Research Intern. Assists in ongoing quantitative and qualitative research projects, writes weekly articles on current research for NLIHC newsletter, attends briefings, and helps staff respond to research inquiries.

All interns will contribute articles to our weekly newsletter, Memo to Members, and perform other duties as assigned. A small stipend is available.

In their cover letter, interested students should specify which position/s they prefer. The cover letter and resume should be sent to:

Bill Shields, Vice President for Operations
National Low Income Housing Coalition
727 15th Street NW, 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

or via email to bill@nlihc.org or fax at 202-393-1973. Please call 202-662-1530 x 232 with any questions.