

April 7, 2023

Hon. Robert White
Chair, Committee on Housing
District of Columbia Council
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

via: housing@dccouncil.gov

RE: Comments on the FY24 budget for affordable housing

Dear Chairman White:

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG). CSG is the leading non-profit organization in the Washington, D.C. region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Our mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish.

In summary, we urge this committee to:

- increase support for the HTPF and sustain complementary LRSP funding
- restore essential ERAP funds to keep more residents from the brink of homelessness.

We wish to express our support for funding the Housing Production Trust Fund. It's still worth stating that the HPTF is an essential, landmark, and core affordable housing tool that has produced 8,200 affordable homes since 2015. This is more than 1,000 units a year. The HPTF is a major force contributing to a better DC that prevents displacement of vulnerable residents, and creates and preserves affordable homes. HPTF has been funded at substantial levels -- far above the original level of \$20 million when we launched this local, dedicated funding source in the early 2000s. We must not forget what a workhouse HPTF is -- delivering quality housing throughout the District. We ask that funding be increased above the \$100 million threshold to continue the important impact of affordable housing production.

We advocated to ensure that HTPF would serve those with the greatest need -- extremely low income households earning 30% MFI or less. LRSP is the main operating funding source to help realize the law's requirement that half of the HPTF funding serve extremely low income families. Thus, continued support for LRSP funding is essential to reaching our goals and better serving our most vulnerable residents.

The FY 2024 budget for DHS proposes devastating cuts to Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) -- from \$43 million in FY 2023 -- to only \$8.2 million. ERAP provides assistance to prevent families from being evicted by helping them pay for overdue rent and related legal costs. We urge the committee to restore these funds to support these essential homelessness prevention investments as vulnerable residents face escalating housing prices.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Cort', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Cort
Policy Director