

Testimony of Gloria Waldron, NY ACORN

Budget Hearing: Housing

December 18, 2007

Good Afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen!

My name is Gloria Waldron and I am a member of NY ACORN. I am also the former president of this wonderful organization, which consist of 60,000 members. NY ACORN has been around for 25 years and our mission for fighting for Affordable Housing for low and moderate income families has not changed. We believe that everyone who is need of housing should be given housing.

We believe that there should be money allocated to agencies such as DHCR and HFA. These two agencies should be given at least \$200 million in new capital funding in next year's budget, so that they can try and tackle this state's affordable housing needs.

For too long, our members have been rallying and lobbying with elected officials about: (1) the need for more affordable housing to be built in our areas instead of luxury. (2) For landlords to stop opting out of Mitchell-lama programs and to stop discriminating low to moderate income families with Section 8. Our voices have been heard on some levels of government. It is our hope that this hearing will provide the additional voices needed for our cries to be heard on all levels of government. Money needs to be allocated to the agencies that will do the work to create affordable housing for low and moderate income families. I know that the DOB has responded to the affordability issue by giving tax rebates to existing homeowners. These rebates could total about \$2 billion dollars over the course of this year and next years budget. This is great for homeowners but our members who are renters are still left struggling with increased rents by landlords.

There are over 330,000 young adults in the downstate area who are unable to find affordable rental housing. And as a result, they are now forced to move back home with their parents and/or

grandparents. The young adults who are unable to move back home are forced to pay more than 30% of their income in rent. Something needs to be done to help our next generations. At a minimum, (1) the states current funding levels for the state's existing housing programs need to be increased by at least one hundred million dollars annually, (2) to raise the bar on the Division's actions on affordable housing capital to the \$13 billion (\$1.3 billion per year) in HF's platform.

ACORN has joined with the Housing First Coalition and in asking for the state to move forward with a ten-year, \$1.3 billion dollar public investment strategy to create and preserve at least 220,000 affordable units. At an average of \$1.3 billion a year , this investment would include new bonds issues, new appropriations, and the establishment of a new Affordable Housing Trust Fund with \$500 million dollars in dedicated annual revenues. This investment can address the state's diversity housing needs. It can also become the catalyst for smart growth, economic development, job creations, business expansions, and much much more.

I urge you to really take a look at our housing needs!!

Thank You!!!!