

Keith Massey's testimony for NY STATE Budget Hearing- 11-29-07
Member and leader of Community Voices Heard

Good afternoon/evening ladies and gentlemen, my name is Keith Massey. I am a member and leader of Community Voices Heard, which is a membership-led and directed organization that is currently engaged in a campaign to save and improve public housing. I am here today to speak with you about some of the issues affecting residents of public housing in NYC.

Residents of public housing have been forced to deal with reductions in services such as maintenance workers being fired which leaves the buildings dirtier. Simple repairs take weeks and months on end to be fixed and there are even some cases where emergency repairs take longer than usual to be addressed. In fact, one of our leaders has been dealing with a stove that spews carbon monoxide since Thanksgiving, as of today that stove remains unfixed. There are many issues that are created because of the lack of government funding public housing has received in the past 12 years or so. We commend the State for allocating \$4.5 million to Public Housing in last year's budget but compared with the \$70 million it is supposed to send annually, that was just a drop in the bucket. This money was greatly appreciated but the state did not allocate all of the funding they were to allocate for that year, nor did it address the fact that our previous Governor Pataki went 12 year's without funding public housing at all. In other places such as Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans and Miami, today as we speak public housing is being either sold/privatized or even demolished. In those places governmental disinvestment was the first step before the bulldozers and developers came running into these communities and most don't even exist today in the capacity in which they used to exist. This process leaves entire communities displaced; it does no good for the working class people who live in public housing. Though you may not have the power to save the public housing developments around the country that are being destroyed, you can save the public housing in your state.

Our suggestion is to reinstate full funding of \$70 million for State built public housing in this year's budget and every year there after. If not, New York City's working class, elderly, disabled, single parents will be left out in the cold. This is New York City we set the stage for the entire nation, let's send a message to rest of the country that New York State is a state where the tired, poor, disabled and elderly, single parents as well as dual parent households can afford a decent place to live!