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April 3, 2023

Budget testimony: Department of Housing and Community Development

Good morning. My name is Alex Baca and I am testifying on behalf of Greater Greater Washington, where I serve as D.C. policy director.

I'm pleased to see that [B25-0202, the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Support Act of 2023](#), includes a subtitle, Subtitle A, enabling land purchases for affordable housing through the Land Purchase Partnership Program Act of 2023 (page 10). GGWash has long advocated¹ for the District to purchase land, for numerous reasons: Doing so can and should undergird increased affordable-housing production by enabling the integration of the value of publicly owned land into a pro forma, and could reinvigorate the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase process by providing a backstop to tenants who want to manage their property but may not desire (or are not able) to purchase it.

While we are appreciative that the administration has uplifted GGWash's core priority, we are disappointed that the Land Purchase Partnership Program Act is unfunded and that it does not subject land acquired through the program, then entered into a disposition process, to D.C. Code § 10-801. We would further prefer that the District, once it has acquired land, not go through the disposition process at all and, rather, bank it and ground-lease its properties.² If necessary, we would support legislation outside of the BSA enabling and funding land acquisition.

Lastly, we do not support the use of funds in the Housing Production Trust Fund for anything other than the production of affordable housing. Cuts to HPTF, which was funded at those unprecedented levels because of federal covid relief dollars, were inevitable, making it even more critical that HPTF funding should be preserved and enhanced for its original intent. The Low-Income Rent Supplement Program should also be funded to the maximum extent possible; both project- and tenant-side subsidies are necessary to produce income-restricted, subsidized housing.

¹ <https://ggwash.org/view/77946/cities-should-buy-land-in-a-downturn>,
<https://ggwash.org/view/77689/16-things-dc-and-other-cities-could-do-about-housing-in-a-downturn>,
<https://ggwash.org/view/77373/how-can-we-talk-about-housing-after-covid-19>

² https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/1xdugLWhIF1zDY7fkDI7FJQGbGy3sucITL_2yYm8blSk/edit,
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dJor_Zc0pNAvk17ljURw4HUzWGtKB8Xso53v4htFbz8/edit,
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Yx_85c_1uP91Nr1rRP6TATAaBSI0QSNCE9OWk4B7s1Q/edit

I've focused my testimony today specifically on land acquisition and HPTF, and I hope that doing so is not considered an exclusion of support for other priorities that have been discarded in the mayor's budget, including permanent supportive housing and emergency rental assistance. We're happy to work closely with the Committee on Housing throughout the FY24 budget process to redress as much as possible in the Department of Housing and Community Development's budget.

Thank you,
Alex

Alex Baca
D.C. Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington
abaca@ggwash.org