

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE MC INTERAGENCY COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS ON BEHALF OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS (MCCH)

April 23, 2019

Good afternoon. My name is Ken Tecler, and I recently joined the Board of Directors of Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless (MCCH), an organization which I have worked closely with for decades. I am a lawyer with expertise in real estate and housing law, affordable housing and housing finance. I served as the General Counsel for the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County for 30 years and currently work in private practice. Based on my significant experience, I am honored to share my thoughts on behalf of MCCH on funding priorities regarding the 2019 NOFA:

1. The current funding structure to serve the most vulnerable clients in scattered site PSH programs is inadequate. Through the work of the Inside Not Outside campaign, MCCH provided PSH to one-third of the more than 400 individuals who have ended their homelessness. MCCH's clients have included those with zero income, causing MCCH to incur \$3,000 annually per client to meet their basic needs for food, medical care and transportation. MCCH also incurred high costs for repairs to scattered site units damaged by clients with significant mental health challenges. Despite MCCH's commitment to staff training, they also incurred higher workers' compensation costs due to claims from staff who have been injured by clients
2. The county must recognize the value of single-site PSH programs such as Cordell Place and Seneca Heights Apartments for the most vulnerable residents. There must be recognition of the higher cost to serve them in single sites compared to scattered sites due to such expenses as 24/7 staffing and building operating costs.
3. The county's HHS Medicaid Waiver pilot program must consider the fact that Medicaid will not cover all expenses in delivering services for the most vulnerable residents. The CoC should allocate additional resources to fill gaps in funding.
4. The closure of the HUD funded Safe Havens Program has created a gap in services for individuals with severe mental illness. The CoC must fill this gap by establishing an appropriate PSH program to support them because scattered site PSH, transitional and rapid re-housing are not appropriate for many of them.
5. The county must give providers adequate notice for the amount of match needed for the 2019 NOFA. Last year, providers were only given two-weeks' notice that the county was changing its longstanding policy of fully matching 25% of HUD funds to 15%. This requirement to fund the 10% gap with cash contributions placed a significant burden on the nonprofits affected.
6. The county must provide applicants with specific feedback in writing after the competition about the rationale for their scores. By giving applicants opportunities to

improve their submissions in subsequent years, we can strengthen the CoC to better serve county residents.

Finally, if there is a Bonus Project this year, there must be specific written guidance about its goals and criteria. Last year, there were mixed messages from HHS about the intended population that resulted in the majority of Bonus Project applicants receiving lower project scores. This was due to an incorrect assumption about the need to serve families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for considering my recommendations.