

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



December 14, 2022

Re: B24-1144, “District of Columbia Housing Authority Stabilization and Reform Emergency Amendment Act of 2022”

Dear Chairman Mendelson and Councilmembers:

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City urges the Council to rescind emergency legislation to restructure the DCHA board -- B24-1144 and the [Amendment in the nature of a substitute to Bill 24-1144](#) -- and to instead hold hearings on failures of the DC Housing Authority Board of Commissioners as outlined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in its “District of Columbia Housing Authority (DC001) Assessment” (released September 30, 2022), and on ways to improve public housing delivery.

The Committee of 100 was unsurprised by HUD’s highly critical review of the Housing Authority and has testified over the years to amplify the voices of public housing residents, their advocates, and several members of the Board of Commissioners in critiquing the agency. What is surprising is that the executive and legislative response to HUD’s report is to make changes to the Board of Commissioners even though the lion’s share of the infractions cited by HUD were committed by agency personnel.

The changes that the Mayor and the Council Chair have proposed for the Board, to be renamed the Stabilization and Reform Board, result in a nine-member board that retains four members of the current board, including the proposed new chair. Notably, the number of resident-elected public housing residents has been reduced by half, from four to two; and the residents’ advocates positions, whose occupants are appointed by labor and legal-aid organizations, have been eliminated. The independent commissioners who challenged business as usual at the Housing Authority have been excised to a person. The result is a board that concentrates mayoral control and places financial matters as the core responsibility of the board. A core principle of racial and economic equity is that outcomes are determined by who is at the table, and in this case, the population that has suffered at the hands of the DC Housing Authority are a receding minority. It is difficult to envision a better outcome for our most vulnerable citizens if advocates are not included in decision making.

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In the spirit of equity, inclusion, and democracy, C100 believes that the Council should not proceed with this emergency legislation. We urge the Committee of the Whole to schedule a public hearing or roundtable in the new year and to base reform legislation on the recommendations heard at the hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kirby Vining". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent "K" and "V".

Kirby Vining, Chair

Committee of 100 on the Federal City