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**TESTIMONY OF KATE COVENTRY, POLICY ANALYST
At the Public Oversight Hearing on:
The Recommendations of the CCNV (Community for Creative Non-Violence) Task Force
District of Columbia Committee on Human Services
July 8, 2014**

Chairman Graham and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kate Coventry, and I am a policy analyst with the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. DCFPI engages in research and public education on the fiscal and economic health of the District of Columbia, with a particular emphasis on how policies impact low- and moderate-income families.

As an ex-officio member of the CCNV (Community for Creative Non-Violence) Task Force, I am here today to testify in support of the “Statement of Principles” adopted by the Task Force last month and to encourage the District to use the Principles as the foundation for the feasibility study funded in the fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget. Finally, I urge the District to continue the Task Force’s work of soliciting feedback from shelter residents and to incorporate this feedback in the decision-making process.

The District owns the CCNV shelter building (officially called the Federal City Shelter) which hosts five nonprofits that offer a wide range of services to as many as 1,300 individuals at any given time. One of those nonprofits, the Community for Creative Non-Violence, owns the adjacent parking lot. Both were given by the federal government with the requirement that they be used to serve the homeless. The requirement on the CCNV lot expires in 2021. Given the coming expiration and the extensive repairs needed, the DC Council convened a Task Force to consider possible redevelopment options.

The Task Force held listening sessions with current residents and reviewed redevelopment projects in other jurisdictions. Given the large number of residents currently served, the Task Force stressed that the District should use the site to meet the needs of homeless residents, while recognizing that that it may not be feasible to serve the same number of people on site after the redevelopment.

The Principles include:

- **Affordable Housing:** Residents overwhelmingly reported that their needs would be better met with housing, and this is backed by research showing that people who are homeless are better able to re-stabilize when placed quickly into housing. As a result, the Task Force recommends a mix of affordable housing, housing designed for the needs of youth under age 24, and permanent supportive housing (PSH). PSH combines affordable housing with intensive support services for individuals with significant behavioral and/or physical health problems.

- **Emergency Shelter:** Most residents agreed that the site should still provide shelter or that shelter should be provided nearby, and so the Task Force recommends the inclusion of year-round 24-hour low barrier shelter beds and hypothermia shelter beds. Low barrier shelters are shelters with few or no requirements for entry, ensuring they are easily accessible to homeless residents.
- **Access to high quality services.** Residents reported that it was difficult to access needed services, particularly case management, employment services, and behavioral health services. Others reported that the case management that is offered is of poor quality and often involves waiting weeks for an appointment. This is in part because contracts between the District and emergency shelter providers do not include service dollars. The Task Force recommends that services be available on site and that providers should meet the highest standards.

DCFPI recommends that the District explore options to address these services needs immediately rather than waiting for the redevelopment to be completed. Making sure shelter residents know about existing governmental resources provided through Department of Behavioral Health and the Department of Employment Services would be a good start. Another possibility could be partnering with organizations that already provide case management and services in the community to ensure that shelter residents have knowledge of and access to these services.

Finally, DCFPI would like to commend you, Councilmember Graham, and the other Task Force members for soliciting and incorporating feedback provided by current shelter residents. As important stakeholders in the future of the site, we encourage the District to continue soliciting and incorporating feedback throughout the redevelopment process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I'm happy to answer any questions.