



# The District's Dime

Going Beyond the Budget Book

The DC Fiscal Policy Institute blog  
[www.dcfpi.org](http://www.dcfpi.org)

March 12, 2014

## DCFPI on the State of the District

By DCFPI Staff

In his speech to the city last night, Mayor Gray unveiled a few key initiatives to make the state of the District stronger in terms of educational outcomes, housing affordability, and solving our homelessness crisis. DCFPI appreciates the mayor's focus on these pivotal issues that will help all District residents benefit from the District's prosperity. As our recent report on [growing wage inequality](#) shows, the state of the District is strong for some in our city, but not for all. Investments in these key areas in next year's budget will start to close our income, achievement, and opportunity gaps.

To address the spike in families needing emergency shelter, Mayor Gray announced a new "500 Families, 100 Days" effort to place 500 families currently living in either DC General or motels into apartment units by June. Mayor Gray said it was a "call to arms" to the wider community—including landlords, realtors, developers, banks and the faith community—to identify low-cost apartments for these families. Families will be moved into identified units through two programs, Rapid Re-Housing and Permanent Supportive Housing. Rapid-Rehousing moves families quickly out of shelter and into housing with temporary subsidies, and Permanent Supportive Housing targets families who might need supportive services to live in on their own and places them in long-term affordable housing.

DCFPI applauds this effort. DCFPI has advocated along with others for just such an approach. As we have previously [reported](#), the District's ability to serve homeless families was hampered by the large number of families in shelter at the start of the season, forcing the District to place families in motels shortly after the season started. This new effort will go a long way to preventing a repeat of what happened this winter.

There is good news that 68 apartments have been identified already. As families exit from shelter and move into these apartments, we hope that any newly homeless families are placed into vacant shelter or motel spaces rather than in recreation centers, which a judge [found](#) posed risks to the health, privacy and security of children.

DCFPI also commends the mayor for his \$100 million commitment to affordable housing, primarily through the Housing Production Trust Fund. However instead of putting dollars into the senior property tax break bill recently passed by the DC Council, which would only help homeowners, DCFPI recommends expanding the Schedule H property tax credit to help both homeowners and renters, and both seniors and non-seniors struggling with high housing costs

Finally, on education, DCFPI is fully supportive of Mayor Gray's proposal to devote [additional resources to help "at-risk" students](#) attending a DCPS or public charter school. This will help target resources to students in high poverty schools. However, DCFPI is concerned about any proposals to include maintenance costs in the per-pupil formula, because this method would underfund the maintenance needs of DCPS but overfund the needs of charter schools.

DCFPI looks forward to working with the Gray administration and the DC Council to make the fiscal year 2015 budget one that helps move all District residents toward stability and opportunity.