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**Testimony of Kate Coventry, Senior Policy Analyst
At the Public Oversight Roundtable on the D.C. Housing Authority's Transformation Plan
DC Council Committee on Housing and Neighborhood Revitalization
January 31, 2020**

Chairperson Bonds, and other members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Kate Coventry, and I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. DCFPI is a nonprofit organization that promotes budget choices to address DC's economic and racial inequities and to build widespread prosperity in the District of Columbia, through independent research and policy recommendations.

DCFPI is a member of the Public Housing Advocates and Organizers Coalition and supports the Coalition's eight goals for public housing repositioning that will be covered in testimony today. I would like to focus my testimony on goal four: "Ensure no loss of deeply affordable units when buildings are redeveloped."

Ensure No Loss of Deeply Affordable Units When Buildings are Redeveloped

The DC Housing Authority should ensure no loss of deeply affordable units when public housing is being redeveloped. DC should have at least the same number of deeply affordable units at the same bedroom size and accessibility as it did prior to repositioning. These units should be available throughout DC, particularly in neighborhoods with high-performing schools, public transportation access, and high-quality jobs.

Doing one-for-one replacement of deeply affordable units is critical because the District is not doing enough to serve DC's lowest-income households. The District has approximately 39,500 extremely low-income rental households who pay over 30 percent of their income on housing. Nearly two-thirds of extremely low-income households spend over half their income on rent, with many paying 80 percent or more. Less than half (39 percent) of the "affordable" apartments the city has supported with public dollars in the last decade—from programs including the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF), the Affordable Housing Preservation Fund (AHPF), Inclusionary Zoning, the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), and tenant vouchers¹—are affordable to households making under 30 percent of area median income (AMI).

Additionally, only 2.7 percent of DC's housing stock is affordable for single-person households making under 30 percent AMI. For larger households, it's basically nonexistent.² The lack of units

¹ Kamolika Das and Doni Crawford. [DC's Affordable Housing Toolbox](https://hillrag.com/2019/04/11/dcs-affordable-housing-toolbox/). *Hill Rag*, April 2019.

² Yesim Sayin Taylor [Taking Stock of the District's Housing Stock](https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/DC-Policy-Center-Housing-Report.final_March25.pdf). DC Policy Center, March 2018.

with multiple bedrooms means that it is particularly important for DCHA match the bedroom sizes of the current units when replacing them.

Maintaining an equal number of accessible units is also critical. In the United States, only .15 percent of all housing units are wheelchair accessible.³ In the District, residents with disabilities who have rental vouchers struggle to find accessible units.⁴

Unfortunately, it is unclear how many deeply affordable units will be created during redevelopment. Based on the [initial transformation plan](#)⁵, it seemed as if there would be fewer deeply affordable large-bedroom size units—but when advocates pointed this out in our joint comments, DCHA claimed that the plan is still in flux and that the final number of units in each property still hasn't been decided. DCHA must be more transparent about the redevelopment plans before implementation continues.

DCHA should have to submit proposed rules governing replacement units to the Council for a 45-day period of review. This proposal should outline a one-for-one replacement plan that:

- certifies that replacement units will be located on the original footprint of the public housing site or “build first” sites in the immediate area surrounding the original public housing footprint;
- ensures replacement units have the same or a greater number of bedrooms;
- guarantees replacement units have the same level of affordability; and
- specifies that the replacement units are first offered to residents displaced from the original units.

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

³ US Department of Housing and Urban Development. [Accessibility of America's Housing Stock: Analysis of the 2011 American Housing Survey \(AHS\)](#). March 19, 2015
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/accessibility-america-housingStock.pdf>

⁴ DC Affordable Housing Alliance. Accessible Housing for People with Disabilities.
https://www.smartergrowth.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ACCESSIBLE-HOUSING-FOR-PEOPLE-WITH-DISABILITIES_election-2014-brief.pdf

⁵ [Our People, Our Portfolio, Our Plan, District of Columbia Housing Authority 20-Year Transformation Plan](#). August 28, 2019 <https://dcha.us/articles/1/57>