



Affordable Housing

Resident Life

Youth Services

Reentry Housing

**Testimony of Miya Gaskins
Director of Family Services
Jubilee Housing, Inc.
Before
COUNCILMEMBER TRAYON WHITE, CHAIR
COMMITTEE ON RECREATION, LIBRARIES, AND YOUTH AFFAIRS
Performance Oversight Hearing on Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs
Thursday, January 20, 2022**

Good afternoon, Councilmember White and Members of the Committee. My name is Miya Gaskins, and I am the Director of Family Services in the Residential Services department for Jubilee Housing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the critical need for increased investment in supporting our Latino community members.

Few investments offer greater long-term impact for inclusion and equity than affordable housing development. And for residents and families whose income is at or below 30% of the Area Medium Income (AMI), the availability of housing affordable at their income level is even more critical and could be the last barrier before homelessness. As the city embarks on a critical review of all new legislation through a racial equity lens, we believe that strategies to ensure our lower income and minority residents have access to affordable housing are some of the most important strategies to address racial equity.

Jubilee Housing, founded in 1973, owns and operates 10 deeply affordable housing properties in the now thriving, resource-rich Adams Morgan community, where gentrification threatens to displace countless long-term residents. Jubilee has come to understand its work as Justice Housing – deeply affordable housing, in thriving neighborhoods, with supportive services onsite and within walking distance. Our internal services include Youth Services for children K-12, Family Services, and Transitional Housing for men and women coming home from incarceration.

The Resident Services department provides assistance to residents to maintain stabilization of their housing, resource navigation, case management, wrap around services, and community wide events such as senior and parent workshops, vaccination clinics, back to school events, cultural celebrations, etc.

Residents of Jubilee Housing include a significant monolingual Spanish speaking population. We are dedicated to language justice by ensuring Spanish speaking residents are able to participate in Jubilee sponsored activities, are able to access a range of services, and feel a sense of belonging to the overall Jubilee community. This requires an investment in ensuring translation of documents as

well as providing interpretive services for residents who are Spanish speaking only. This includes assistance with accessing much needed community-based resources with the help and support of our Resident Services staff. MOLA's commitment to initiatives for economic empowerment of the Latino community must include resources to provide language justice. The two go hand in hand. More assistance with translation and interpretive services is needed, either by supporting current services or providing funds to hire new multilingual staff members.

The Mayor's Office of Latino Affairs has supported our Residents Services economic stability work with Latino residents since 2016 and is one of a few funders that provide funding for interpretation and translation. Through the current MOLA Grant, Jubilee Housing is providing individualized assistance to families navigating financial challenges, financial empowerment counseling and/or eviction prevention services, benefits check-ups for seniors who qualify for local, state, federal entitlements, and financial literacy for youth adults in small group settings. One of our primary objectives is to prioritize stable family housing in affordable homes in this resource-rich neighborhood of Adams Morgan/Columbia Heights. The support of MOLA has been substantial; however, more support is needed to best serve the Latino residents of Jubilee Housing.

Additionally, Jubilee Housing is preparing to acquire three new properties through the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act. Through meetings with the tenant associations over the past several months, we know that about 75% of the 160 new residents are from Central America and many only speak Spanish. We anticipate that many will seek assistance through our Resident Services staff which will require additional casework. Growth for Jubilee Housing will double in size over the next few years with a surge in serving monolingual Spanish speaking residents. For them to fully feel included in the Jubilee community as well as the wider community, an increased commitment to supporting language justice is essential.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and for your on-going commitment to the Latino community of our city who rely on many critical programs funded by MOLA. Jubilee Housing affirms the importance of their programs and urge you to consider increasing their funding to provide additional supports for the broader Latino community.