

Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council

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Memorandum

To: The Honorable Robert Venables, Chair
The honorable Helene M. Keeley, Co-Chair
Members: The Joint Legislative Committee on Capital Improvement Program

From: The Developmental Disabilities Council

Date: May 4, 2011

Subject: Bond Bill Housing Hearing

The Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council recognizes the glaring need for more affordable and accessible housing in Delaware to support both the Money Follows the Person Initiative and children aging out of foster care. For both groups, more affordable and accessible housing will be needed throughout the state for them to successfully live in the community. People who currently live in institutions and long to live in the community will never have that dream realized unless more affordable and accessible housing becomes available. Additionally, children who are aging out of foster care are in need of affordable housing as they attempt to start their lives in the adult world. Unfortunately, many people leaving institutions for the community and children aging out of foster care will fall into the category of extremely low-income Delawareans. Sadly, much of the housing considered affordable is still out of reach of extremely low-income Delawareans.

With that in mind, the Developmental Disabilities Council supports the Delaware Housing Coalition's FY 2012 budget recommendations of \$3.0 million for the statewide rental assistance program to help meet the critical needs of the extremely low-income Delawareans; \$4.0 million for the purpose of preserving additional at-risk rental housing and retaining



for the State the accompanying federal subsidies which make these units affordable to low-income Delawareans; \$250,000 for the difficult work of foreclosure prevention that impacts many low-income Delawareans and \$350,000 for housing counseling to replace a year's loss of operational funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to enable essential foreclosure and first time home ownership to survive.

Additionally, the Developmental Disabilities Council believes that all new affordable housing built with tax payers' money should also be accessible so everyone, including those of us who can't negotiate steps for any reason, can live in them. If new affordable housing is built with the basics of universal design all taxpayers will benefit. Universal design makes life better for everyone. At some point in our lives, we will all benefit from an accessible home built with the basics of universal design. Building those homes from scratch costs very little extra, but remodeling them when accessibility is needed can cost a tremendous amount. It just makes sense to build in the accessibility features from the beginning when costs to do so are very low.

Thank you for this opportunity to present to you information on this very important matter that impacts the lives of so many Delawareans.