



THE COUNCIL  
OF  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
CITY HALL  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007

December 19, 2007

Hon. Arnie Fielkow, President  
New Orleans City Council  
City Hall, Room 2W40  
1300 Perdido Street  
New Orleans, LA 70112

Dear President Fielkow,

As Members of the New York City Council we write to urge the New Orleans City Council to vote against the issuance of permits allowing the demolition of more than 4,000 units of public housing in your city. In the alternative, we urge the New Orleans City Council to defer its vote on this issue until a comprehensive evaluation of the effects of a potential demolition on the residents of New Orleans is undertaken.

As you are undoubtedly aware, the homeless population in New Orleans has doubled since hurricane Katrina even though the City's population is less than half of what it was before the storm. To destroy any public housing units will only make certain that displaced residents currently living around the United States will have no affordable homes to which to return, thereby becoming permanently displaced.

Affordable housing is critical to the poor and working class of every city--we in New York are acutely aware of this reality. Housing costs are skyrocketing in cities around the country and destroying viable subsidized housing, particularly when there is no commitment to the replacement of these low income units, is foolish and will have a potentially devastating impact on the lives of countless New Orleanians and their families. Diminishing affordable housing will also affect communities like New York City where thousands of New Orleans residents have fled and currently reside. The last thing New Orleans needs is to start trading its already limited affordable housing stock for more expensive apartments, making it tougher for hardworking families – the ones that keep the city running – to make their homes there.

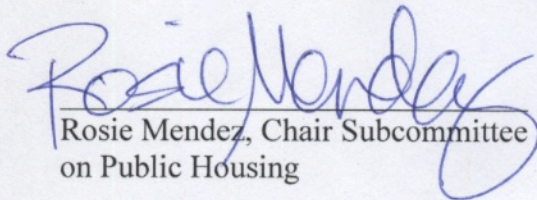
Building new affordable housing is an extraordinarily expensive undertaking, and there is no guarantee that the necessary funding would be in place to build more units at similar prices. In fact, this idea has had a remarkably poor track record in other cities that have tried it. A representative of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) proposed that the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) sell some of its property

in lucrative areas of the city in order to finance some of its budget deficit but, wisely, NYCHA administrators and New York City officials have expressed no interest in making that mistake. Demolishing public or affordable housing in areas deemed desirable only serves to push the less affluent to the margins of the city, gentrify neighborhoods, and segregate low-income communities. Time and again this type of isolation of poorer areas has been shown to increase poverty.

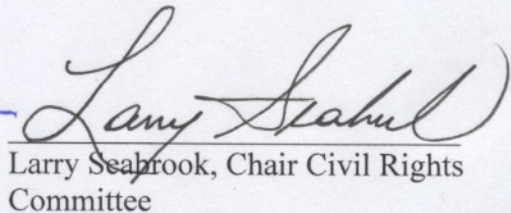
To avoid this type of devastation, the New York City Council has taken several steps to preserve our affordable housing stock. In the last two years we have passed legislation encouraging the development of affordable housing. As part of a series of comprehensive re-zonings, we have given developers a density bonus if they provide on-site affordable housing. We have offered tax incentives to developers who build housing with a certain number of affordable units in particular neighborhoods and we provided funding for Section 8 vouchers to be used by some of our City's homeless or poor. Our Council is committed to keeping its existing public housing stock, developing more affordable housing, and promoting a desegregation policy that doesn't punish or sacrifice poor and low-income residents.

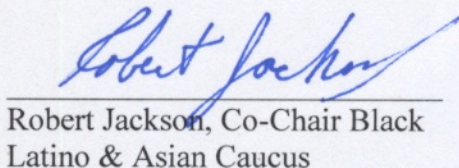
The New York City Council is united in our support for our public housing and urges you to unite behind your constituents who so desperately need your help. Don't destroy your viable affordable housing.

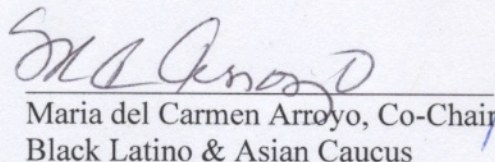
Sincerely,

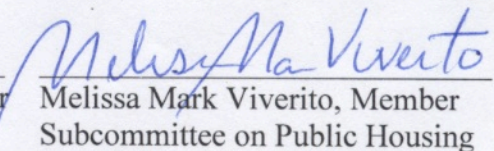
  
Rosie Mendez, Chair Subcommittee  
on Public Housing

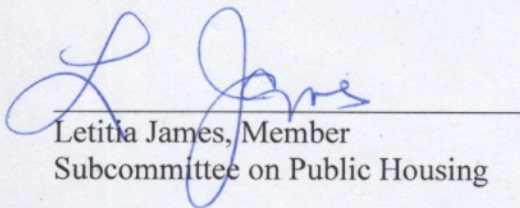
  
Erik Martin Dilan, Chair Housing &  
Buildings Committee

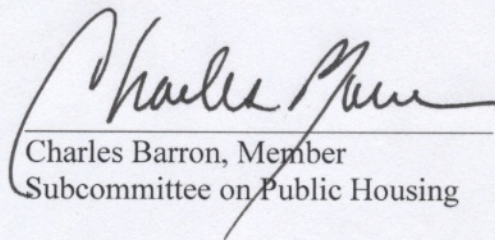
  
Larry Seabrook, Chair Civil Rights  
Committee

  
Robert Jackson, Co-Chair Black  
Latino & Asian Caucus

  
Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Co-Chair  
Black Latino & Asian Caucus

  
Melissa Mark Viverito, Member  
Subcommittee on Public Housing

  
Letitia James, Member  
Subcommittee on Public Housing

  
Charles Barron, Member  
Subcommittee on Public Housing