



April 28th, 2009

Senator
311A Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706-0001

Dear Senator,

As the budget hearings unfold, we at the Chicago Rehab Network hope to enlist your leadership on an issue of foundational proportions to all Illinoisans: housing and its affordability. I would first like to thank you for your support of housing measures in our state, supporting affordable housing in Illinois creates stronger communities for us all. In regards to this budget, I would like to draw your attention and your consideration to three key issues of particular importance:

- **Expanding the Weatherization Assistance Program to leverage the preservation of multifamily rental units**
 - Administered by DCEO in Illinois, the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) provides a crucial resource to Illinois households by providing weatherization services which in turn reduce utility costs.
 - WAP received a substantial increase in funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) providing an opportunity for Illinois to expand its program to cover multifamily rental units as well as the single family homes the program has traditionally served.
 - Extending WAP to include direct support of multifamily rental properties would provide a long term benefit by enhancing the housing of these properties as well as maintaining quality, affordable units for years to come.
 - This is especially important at this time as foreclosures and uncertain credit markets leave homeownership out of reach for many, leaving rental housing as a necessary option.
- **Using the Capital Budget as a way to increase the quality and quantity of multifamily rental housing**
 - The inclusion of \$25 million for housing is commendable and shows foresight by recognizing the importance of housing in a strong infrastructure.
 - It is important, however, to make sure that these funds target those who are most in need. As housing costs continue to rise and the foreclosure crisis continues, it is important that this money is targeted to aid those who rent in multifamily buildings. Specifying that funds dedicated to housing within the capital budget are used for multifamily rental units is a strategic way to have a large impact with the funding.
 - Renters make up nearly 25% of the housing stock across the state of Illinois and 47% of these homes are housing cost burdened and pay 35% or more of their income for housing costs.

- **The Illinois Affordable Housing Trust Fund should be restored to its original purposes**
 - The Trust Fund serves as a resource low and very-low income families by funding affordable housing initiatives, either rehab or new construction.
 - The Trust fund is funded through the Real Estate Transfer tax, receiving 50 cents of every transfer dollar. This amounts to \$20-22 million annually.
 - In recent years, funds have been diverted away from the Trust Fund for a variety of purposes but now, in this time of economic crisis, it is time to return those funds to families in need of housing resources

As you continue negotiating the terms of the budget for 2010, please keep in mind the paramount importance of housing to the people and the infrastructure of Illinois. If you have any questions concerning the issues addressed in this letter or with other housing matters, feel free to contact me at the contact information at the close of this letter.

Sincerely,

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