



PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY CENTER

Nurturing Families, Strengthening Neighborhoods, Driving Change.

Testimony of

**Kira Strong, Vice President for Community and Economic Development, People's
Emergency Center,**

To Philadelphia City Council, April 6, 2015

Good afternoon, I am Kira Strong, Vice President for Community and Economic Development, People's Emergency Center (PEC).

PEC's mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change in West Philadelphia. We have developed more than 240 housing units and five educational centers which offer employment training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, life skills and technology access. With these services PEC seeks to support the positive life trajectory for the women and children who seek our services.

PEC's community development programs respond to community needs and build on neighborhood assets to help bridge the digital divide, expand mixed-income housing opportunities, stimulate economic growth, create wealth, and improve the quality of life for all West Philadelphia residents.

I am here to speak about the incredible need for affordable housing we see in our work with homeless families and in the neighborhoods we serve.

As you know, there are over 100,000 households in Philadelphia who are rent burdened – paying more than 30-50% of their income towards housing. In West Philadelphia's Promise Zone, approximately 50% of our residents are rent burdened.

At PEC, we see this evidenced in the fact that last year more than 1500 families and their 4,000 children entered the city's emergency housing system, and another 70 families resided in the city's transitional housing program. More than 400,000 people in Philadelphia live under poverty. We see it evidenced by the more than 800 applications for 32 spots of affordable housing in a development we completed a couple of years ago. I saw it 2 weeks ago at 8am when I walked into a lobby full of prospective applicants for our recently completed Bigham Place development on the first day we started accepting applications.

We also see the need to preserve affordability, especially in neighborhoods with rapidly changing real estate markets like ours in West Philadelphia. PEC has completed over 120 basic systems and façade

*Administration &
Community Development*
Rowan House
325 North 39th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
P: 267-777-5800
F: 267-777-5885

*Employment Services, Income
Supports, Digital Inclusion,
& Policy*
Families First
3939 Warren Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
P: 267-777-5865
F: 267-777-5887

Housing & Services
Gloria's Place
3902 Spring Garden Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
P: 267-777-5868
F: 267-777-5886

Email: pec@pec-cares.org
Website: www.pec-cares.org
www.facebook.com/PeoplesEmergencyCenter
www.facebook.com/LancasterAvePhilly



Donor Option #00



PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY CENTER

Nurturing Families, Strengthening Neighborhoods, Driving Change.

repairs for existing low-income residents, many elderly or minimum wage workers -- without this intervention, these residents would likely be displaced. By helping them stabilize their homes, we prevent homelessness and prevent vacancy and deterioration on residential blocks.

In addition to building units, PEC is fortunate to be able to provide other critical services that help prevent homelessness and connect residents to the resources they need. We are able to offer connections to city services through the NAC program, the Benefits Access Center and the Financial Access Center in addition to many other services.

Even with these services and the units we have been able to produce, it is not enough and it takes too long. Our typical affordable housing development takes 3-5 years from conception to rent up due to needing to apply multiple times before a project is funded because the competition and need to is great. This is simply not an efficient or budget-conscious way to produce any kind of housing, especially one for which there is so great a need. Additionally, if sufficient funding were available, PEC would be able to fill what is a great need for low-moderate income rental and ownership units in our area of West Philadelphia which is rapidly filling with student housing.

We understand that funding the creation and preservation of affordable housing units and related services is difficult, and that you understand that the need is great. Thank you for holding these hearings and listening to our testimony.

For more information, contact PEC at policy@pec-cares.org

*Administration &
Community Development*
Rowan House
325 North 39th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
P: 267-777-5800
F: 267-777-5885

*Employment Services, Income
Supports, Digital Inclusion,
& Policy*
Families First
3939 Warren Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
P: 267-777-5865
F: 267-777-5887

Housing & Services
Gloria's Place
3902 Spring Garden Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104
P: 267-777-5868
F: 267-777-5886

Email: pec@pec-cares.org
Website: www.pec-cares.org
www.facebook.com/PeoplesEmergencyCenter
www.facebook.com/LancasterAvePhilly



Donor Option #00