

TESTIMONY FOR BUDGET HEARING – DECEMBER 07, 2010  
TO THE HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

PRESENTED BY – DR. CLARENCE LAM  
COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL OF HOWARD COUNTY, INC.

GOOD EVENING COUNTY EXECUTIVE ULMAN,  
MR. WACKS AND MR. ROBBINS. THANK YOU FOR  
THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY ON BEHALF OF THE  
COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL OF HOWARD  
COUNTY. MY NAME IS DR. CLARENCE LAM, I AM A  
PHYSICIAN WITH JOHNS HOPKINS BLOOMBERG  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND CURRENTLY  
SERVE AS A MEMBER OF CAC'S BOARD OF  
DIRECTORS.

LOW INCOME FAMILIES IN HOWARD COUNTY  
CONTINUE TO NEED YOUR HELP. ON A DAILY  
BASIS, COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL PROVIDES  
SUPPORT TO LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS TO BREAK

THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF POVERTY, AND HELP THEM TOWARD SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

WE ARE PROUD OF BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY THAT IS RECOGNIZED FOR ITS EXCELLENCE IN SO MUCH THAT WE HOLD DEAR. BUT WE ALSO SEE DAY AFTER DAY HOW WIDESPREAD WEALTH AND AFFLUENCE HAS KEPT THE PRICES OF BASIC NECESSITIES LIKE FOOD AND SHELTER AT A HIGH LEVEL AND OUT OF REACH FOR SO MANY FAMILIES.

ACCORDING TO A RECENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT CONDUCTED BY CAC, APPROXIMATELY 27,000 INDIVIDUALS IN HOWARD COUNTY HAVE INCOME AT OR LESS THAN 200% OF FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES, 4% OF HOUSEHOLDS EARN LESS THAN \$15,000 PER YEAR, AND THERE ARE MORE

THAN 700 CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR HEAD START SERVICES.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE IS THAT THE HIGHEST CONCENTRATION OF POVERTY (23%) IS AMONG SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES WHO HAVE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5. IMAGINE A MOTHER OF TWO CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5, MAKING ABOUT \$450 PER WEEK - SHE CANNOT ENROLL HER CHILDREN IN HEAD START BECAUSE ALL THE SLOTS ARE TAKEN – SHE CANNOT RECEIVE SUBSIDIZED HOUSING BECAUSE THERE ARE NO AVAILABLE VOUCHERS. WITH CHILD CARE COST AVERAGING BETWEEN \$180 TO \$210 PER CHILD PER WEEK AND HOUSING COST AVERAGING \$1,300 PER MONTH, HER CHOICES ARE VERY LIMITED INDEED.

89 PERCENT OF RENTERS IN HOWARD COUNTY WHO MAKE BETWEEN \$20,000 AND \$35,000 A YEAR PAY MORE THAN 30% OF THEIR INCOME ON RENT.

FOR MANY OF THESE FAMILIES, EVICTION APPEARS TO BE A SIGNIFICANT FACT-OF-LIFE EXPERIENCE. THEY FACE AFFORDABILITY CHALLENGES EVERY SINGLE MONTH. DATA COLLECTED BY CAC SUGGESTS THAT NON-PAYMENT OF RENT IS THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF EVICTION.

SELF SUFFICIENCY FOR FAMILIES LIVING AT OR BELOW 200% OF POVERTY IS ATTAINABLE THROUGH CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR PROGRAMS SUCH AS HEAD START, HOUSING, AND FOOD ASSISTANCE.

EACH MONTH ABOUT 400 FAMILIES VISIT THE FOOD BANK AND ON AVERAGE 20% OF THE TOTAL VISITORS ARE FIRST TIME CLIENTS.

WHEN THINKING ABOUT OUR SENIOR CITIZEN POPULATION, THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 1,426 INDIVIDUALS OVER THE AGE OF 65 WHO ARE LIVING BELOW POVERTY. BUT EVEN LIVING AT 200% OF POVERTY LEVEL MEANS THAT A FAMILY OF TWO IS MAKING LESS THAN \$23,000 PER YEAR.

MR. ULMAN, WE ARE GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT, FOR YOUR COMPASSION, AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE URGENCY TO ASSURE THAT OUR FOOD BANK IS FISCALLY POSITIONED TO SERVE, AND THAT THERE IS ADEQUATE FUNDING IN EVICTION PREVENTION AND RENTAL ASSISTANCE TO HELP FAMILIES FACING HOUSING CRISIS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION.

[HTTP://WWW.CO.HO.MD.US/OCS/OCSDOCS/HOWARD.PDF](http://www.co.ho.md.us/OCS/OCSDOCS/HOWARD.PDF)