

October 9, 2001

Honorable James T. Walsh
Subcommittee on VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
H143, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515-6022

Dear Chairman Walsh:

As the nation begins the long process of recovering from the tragic events of September 11th, immediate assistance must be provided to those directly affected by the terrorist attacks. According to New York State's Empire State Development Corporation, approximately 60,000 jobs were "physically displaced" and many of those will be permanently lost. For numerous support workers—cooks, restaurant waitstaff, retail clerks, janitors and building service workers—replacement jobs will be difficult to find in a slumping economy. Thousands of low-wage employees will face overwhelming financial difficulties as they resume their normal lives. High on their list of concerns will be maintaining their pre-existing accommodations.

We urge the creation of an emergency allocation of Section 8 housing vouchers for workers physically displaced to prevent such victims from losing their homes in addition to having lost their jobs. The Emergency Section 8 vouchers could retain the current eligibility criteria. The only additional qualification criteria need be verified employment at the World Trade Center and its environs (New York City) or at the Pentagon (Arlington, Virginia) as of September 10, 2001 and loss of employment as a direct result of the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

Families of those killed in the terrorist attacks will be the main recipients of the approximately \$675 million raised by private charities and relief agencies as well as the "September 11th Victim Compensation Fund of 2001" that was created by the U.S. Congress. Those who escaped with their lives may be under more immediate financial duress. Although FEMA's "Mortgage Rental Assistance" program provides housing payments to those in financial hardship as a result of a major disaster, individuals must have received written notice of dispossession or eviction before FEMA provides aid. In addition, the period of assistance is limited to 18 months. Due to the magnitude of the physical and economic destruction, particularly in New York City, FEMA's housing assistance program will not

adequately meet the needs of all families affected. Given the economic outlook for the nation and the New York City region in particular, it would be disastrous if the federal government waited until low-income families were on the verge of eviction or foreclosure before extending limited assistance.

Since 1937, Citizens Housing and Planning Council has been a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy research and advocacy organization specializing in housing, planning, and economic development issues in New York City. We urge Congress to immediately allocate Section 8 vouchers to specifically benefit individuals who lost their jobs as the result of the terrorist attacks.

Sincerely,

Frank Braconi
Executive Director