

Testimony for March 25th Public Hearing to End Homelessness

My name is Phil Welch, Jr. I live in the Lincroft section of Middletown. I'm a member of the Middletown United Methodist Church (UMC). I'm a regular volunteer with Habitat for Humanity in Monmouth County and A Future With Hope, the Sandy Recovery non-profit of the Greater NJ UMC.

I'm also a member of the Board of Trustees of Family Promise of Monmouth County. I've been involved FPMC for at least 13 years and before that for another 13 years as part of the first Interfaith Hospitality Network in Union County (the predecessor of Family Promise). Family Promise's mission is to provide shelter, meals and intensive case management to homeless families through a network of interfaith congregations. In 28 years National FP has grown to over 180 affiliates in almost every state.

As a result of my involvement, I know I'm not an expert, because this is only a part-time passion of mine. The experts are the staff of the various homeless shelters, including the Family Promise affiliates in the state, and in particular Tracy Boyer, Executive Director of FPMC, and Ileana Hernandez, Interim Case Manager. In addition, I have a lot of respect for the staff of Monarch Housing, and especially Taiisa Kelly.

Taiisa is the author of a paper entitled "New Jersey Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness Public Hearing Sample Talking Points." I have read this paper and hope that it will be submitted to you and that you will seriously consider the points and recommendations made.

In my testimony, I rely on my personal observations and insights from years of volunteering with Family Promise. Specifically, I'd like to focus on families with children (under the age of 18) which are homeless. In many cases, parents become homeless through no fault of their own. In almost every case I'm familiar with, children are homeless through absolutely no fault of their own. They are the silent, but very real victims of homelessness. In an interesting side note, it was only a couple of years ago that HUD decided that homeless families could be homeless and should be counted in the biennial point-in-time surveys of homeless individuals, including parents with children.

The overwhelming majority, roughly 4 of 5 families served by our FPMC affiliate are headed by single mothers. About half of those mothers have children ages 5 and under. Here's what I think those mothers need to pull themselves up and out of their homeless situations:

1. Young men who are good husbands and fathers, but at the very least pay **child support** for the children they father. This is a legal, moral and ethical obligation that is our responsibility as parents and members of faith-based communities to instill in our boys and youth. This would make a significant difference in the lives of these single mothers.

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2. **Career counseling and job training** for the single mothers to allow them to reach their potential, earn a livable wage and be positive role models for their children, especially their daughters.
3. **Child care alternatives** which are innovative and economically sustainable, for both the single mothers and for the child care professionals.
4. Matching funds for **first month's rent and security deposits**.
5. **Rent subsidies** for these single mothers through programs such as Rapid Rehousing which is discussed in the Monarch Housing paper I referenced above.
6. **Supportive services**, such as parenting skills, family budgeting, credit counseling, etc. that are available in a Housing First model, after the families get into permanent housing, again recommended in the Monarch Housing talking points.
7. **More housing choices** – safe decent, affordable housing for low-income families, including those of very low income which is the case for many single mothers with pre-school children.

I'm sure there are many more suggestions that those who are involved in helping homeless families on a full-time basis could offer. These are the most important ones that I could think of quickly.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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