

DC Board of Zoning Adjustments
Public Hearing
Regarding Cases 19287, 19288, and 19289

June 28, 2016

Testimony of Ericka Taylor, Executive Director, DC Fair Budget Coalition

Good morning, Commission members. My name is Ericka Taylor and I'm the Executive Director of the DC Fair Budget Coalition, or FBC, a coalition of advocacy organizations, service providers, faith organizations, and community members concerned with meeting the human needs of the District's most vulnerable residents.

I am before you today, on behalf of FBC, to urge you to approve the zoning applications of the District's Department of General Services in cases numbers 19287 and 19288 and of 5th Street Partners LLC, in case number 19289. In each of these three cases, zoning variances are necessary to ensure the closure of DC General and its replacement with short-term family housing facilities. These zoning variances will allow for adequate space for recreation and programming, while families work toward securing permanent housing, and they will also provide the space necessary to eliminate congregate bathrooms.

The proposals before you have the full support of the DC City Council and the mayoral administration, because they will help ensure safe and dignified housing for our residents who have fallen on difficult times. School-age children are especially vulnerable to the stressors associated with experiencing homelessness. According to a Harvard Medical School study, "Almost half of school-age homeless children have emotional problems like anxiety and depression. ... They also experience four times the rate of developmental delays and double the learning disabilities, and they are twice as likely to be suspended from school or repeat a grade as other poor children." We can keep from exacerbating these problems by allowing variances to zoning laws that weren't designed with short-term family facilities in mind.

Please help protect vulnerable children and families from harm and further destabilization by making the requested zoning adjustments in cases 19287, 19288, and 19289. Thank you for your time and consideration