

“Testimony in Support of the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning’s
Proposal, case number. 04-33.” July 25, 2005

Good evening, members of the DC Zoning Commission, my name is Fred Allen I am a Board member and the Treasurer of the Metropolitan Washington Council of the AFL-CIO, which represents more than 150,000 members from almost 175 affiliated local unions in the greater Washington, DC area. In addition, I currently serve as the DC COPE Chairman I am pleased to appear before you today to speak in support of the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning’s Proposal, case number 04-33 I would like to open my remarks by thanking this panel and all of the endorsing organizations for their hard work in getting us to this hearing

The Metropolitan Washington Council has joined with dozens of community and religious allies to form the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning We did so because we know that affordable housing is a serious issue affecting our members and working families The issue will not resolve itself and so we must implement measures to insure that we don’t run the working class away from this fine city.

Some 50,000 of our members live in the District of Columbia They perform jobs and deliver services of every type and description from the most basic to the most sophisticated Increasingly, as housing prices soar, one of their greatest concerns is whether they can afford to live in this city Many non-union working families share their concern

It is certainly no secret that DC is undergoing a boom of unprecedented proportions in the price of residential housing The high priced housing has some tangible

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EXHIBIT NO. 48

benefits for the city in the form of increased property tax and transfer tax revenues. But as a result, middle and low-income working families are being priced out of the housing market. Currently, a District family must earn \$85,000 to afford an average home here and \$72,000 to afford the average rental. But the median household income is just over \$52,000.

The result is that each year, many working families have to leave the District in search of affordable housing. For many of them though, leaving is not an option. They must remain District residents as a condition of employment. Others, such as union retirees and their families, must stay because leaving the city presents other issues such as difficulty in accessing transportation to shopping, healthcare or employment. So they find themselves in a Catch-22. They don't earn enough to afford decent housing here but if they leave, they lose their jobs or become stranded in a suburb lacking the accessibility and convenience of this city.

The simple fact is that for the working class, incomes have not risen in tandem with housing prices in the District. From January 1999 to March 2003, the price of homes for sale here rose four times faster than incomes. In the same period, the price of rentals rose three times faster.

What's more, the supply of affordable housing is dwindling and is being replaced by expensive condos and townhouses. The divide between the haves and the have-nots grows greater. Yet the very people and families that are priced out of the housing market are the very same folks who bring diversity, stability and vitality to neighborhoods. Something must be done to reverse this trend, because I believe that our nation's capital should be a showcase for strong, diverse neighborhoods.

There is no single solution to the affordable housing crisis in the District. When the Metropolitan Washington Council first became involved in this issue, we relied upon think tanks such as Policy Link, a national nonprofit organization, for their insight on how other regions were attempting to resolve affordable housing issues. According to Policy Link, hundreds of jurisdictions from coast to coast, including our neighbors in Montgomery County, have used inclusionary zoning to help meet their communities' affordable housing needs.

Based upon the national analysis that Policylink conducted for us, we believe that our proposal on mandatory inclusionary zoning is in accord with the most effective inclusionary zoning programs across the country. I encourage you to read this very informative report, which has already been submitted to you. (Hold up the Policylink report)

We in the labor movement are confident that Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning will prove to be an important tool in maintaining and improving our city's prosperity and quality of life for all of its citizens, not just the privileged few. The Labor Council and its 150,000 members urge the Zoning Commission to act quickly in adopting the proposal developed by the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning. It is a well-researched IZ proposal, and it will help our city become stronger and more supportive of working families.

Thank you for allowing me to testify here today. The members of our panel would love to answer any questions that you may have.