

**Ms. Cheryl Brunson – Feb. 23 Testimony**  
**Case No. 14-18A**

I've been living at Brookland Manor since 1994. When I first moved there it was myself, my two daughters and my son – they are now 30, 31, and 39. The older kids no longer live with me and I'm now raising my grandkids, so now it's me, my grandson Gino, who is 17 and my granddaughter Marianna who is 8. It's the three of us now living at Brookland Manor. When I first moved there it was very family-oriented. Everybody knew everybody and we all shared in whatever we needed. Everybody shared and we did things as a family in the neighborhood. We would sit out and watch each other's kids in the front playing together, watching the fellas play ball on the basketball court with teenage boys. The teenagers were playing the old timers, the old timers were showing the younger boys how to play ball – the atmosphere was phenomenal.

In the last couple of years since they've started this redevelopment stuff, I have seen frustration on my neighbors faces, stress, kids are stressed because they're being moved around the property from one place to another, not knowing where they will move to next. When you see vacant buildings all around when you've been at Brookland Manor for so many years and never saw vacant apartments, that's very stressful.

Some of the tactics they have used to push us off the property include the security guards. In all the time I've been at Brookland Manor there have never been security. When they first came we were told it was for our safety, but I found out that it was to sweep us out of the community. They encourage residents

to make up things or tell about things that are happening with neighbors, causing conflict and division. They harass people for things like leaning on the fence, stepping on the grass, standing with kids at bus stops. They say when we come out we have to stand in the “tree box” which is an area between the street and the sidewalk. They give us what they call notices of infraction for breaking what they say are “rules,” and these notices are new because we never had a problem standing in front of our buildings before all this started.

Last year, March 14, 2016, my boyfriend hit me, and busted my forehead open. I called the police because I didn’t know what to do, because I had a humaratic stroke, and I wasn’t sure if he busted the stent in my forehead which keeps blood matter from mixing with brain matter. I called the ambulance and the police, I went to court and got a stay away order. A week later I got an infraction letter stating that he wasn’t allowed on the property anymore. So I received a notice of infraction because he hit me. These are the kinds of things that they are doing to make you not be a desirable tenant. This is their way of saying that you’re not in “good standing” and they say you can only come back if you’re in “good standing” and they haven’t said what that means.

What we are asking for is to preserve 535 units of affordable housing at the same bedroom size. Why is that so hard? They are doing this redeveloping all over the metropolitan area and they are not considering the low income people and people who can’t afford these condos and penthouses they’re putting up. They are not considering the working class people. All they see is dollar signs. Our livelihood is worth more than a dollar sign. Bowser says she wants to do something about people living in tents, but

we're about to be homeless – why would they do this? We are being put out all over the city, Barry Farms, Congress Heights – you are taking our homes without giving us one back.

This redevelopment doesn't include African American people because it's not going to be affordable. He says he wants a mixed community, but we're all getting put out, so where is the mix? They should be ashamed for even saying that. We are not trying to say that we don't want to see change, Brookland Manor could use a face lift and more businesses to the neighborhood. That's something that we could use, but the only way we can use it is if we are there, and if they bring back 535 units at the same bedroom size and subsidy levels, and we can grow up comfortably in the same neighborhood that we grew up in and that we have raised our children in.

Moving us somewhere else is like detaching us from our loved ones and our community. We want this for ourselves, but we also want this for those who have been pushed out of the community. It's hard when you see stuff like this being done to your neighbors and your family, because you feel like your family is Brookland Manor and there's nothing you can do about it. All who were pushed out should have the opportunity to come back, and for the remaining units, people in need of affordable housing should be welcomed in.