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Date. May 7, 2015

Attn. DC Zoning Commission

Re. Testimony on health impacts of housing displacement for Brookland Manor residents

Good evening,

I am honored to speak before this Zoning Commission. To provide some context as to my qualifications, I am trained as a psychologist and have been licensed as a professional counselor in Washington, DC since 2011. I have counseled and assessed young people and their families for thousands of hours since 2003. I have worked, volunteered, and led various programs and initiatives in the field of youth homelessness for eight years. I have researched housing and homelessness issues and published and presented dozens of times. I currently work for the American Psychological Association, serve on the national and local boards of StandUp For Kids, a group that is committed to ending the cycle of youth homelessness, and serve on the board and as chair the Youth Working Group of the DC Center for the LGBT Community. I am not here to represent these organizations and their views, I name them only to situate my own expertise in the larger systems that I traverse.

I would like to focus my comments tonight on the **effects of displacement in the lives of children, youth and families**. My findings are research-based and evidence-informed. In order to talk about these concepts, I must reframe the conversation for a moment. I am sensitive to the fact that someone of my background is not a common witness in Commission hearings like these. As such, I should not expect that terms like *housing insecurity*, *residential mobility*, and *social determinant of health* have everyday utility. These terms will form the basis of my arguments before you. On the other hand, I choose not to use words like “neighborhood improvement,” “redevelopment” and “economic opportunity,” not because they are inherently bad ideas, but because they do not describe actual experiences of individuals, nor do they have clear and credible research backing in the health literature.

A seminal 2011 study¹ in the American Journal of Public Health, authored by 10 experts across the country, noted that housing is considered *a very strong social determinant of health*. A social determinant of health is a particular factor that influences the health of individuals in certain groups. These determinants surround the individual but are not germane to that individual. They can be positive or negative. For example, if any of you have lived in a quiet neighborhood in the same house for an extended period of time, you may have had the enlightened thought that your housing security has positively impacted your health. You would indeed be right. On the other hand, housing *insecurity* negatively impacts health outcomes in both children and adults.

¹ Cutts DB1, Meyers AF, Black MM, Casey PH, Chilton M, Cook JT, Geppert J, Ettinger de Cuba S, Heeren T, Coleman S, Rose-Jacobs R, Frank DA. US Housing insecurity and the health of very young children. Am J Public Health 2011 Aug;101(8) 1508-14

The Department of Health and Human Services states that *housing insecurity* can relate to high housing costs in proportion to income, poor housing quality, unstable neighborhoods, overcrowding, and/or homelessness. On the last condition, the 10 public health experts from the 2011 study noted, “Homeless children are recognized as being vulnerable to multiple health risks, but there are millions of less visible children whose health, development, and growth may be compromised.”¹

These “less-visible children” that I hope to bring into focus tonight live at Brookland Manor. Displacing them from their homes could trigger HHS’s definition of housing insecurity in at least three ways. First, there is the potential that families who need to resettle will face higher *costs of housing*. Second, for families that cannot afford anything more than what they currently pay, there is a potential *reduction in the quality of their housing*. Finally, displacement could lead to *reducing neighborhood stability*, for example, the loss of informal networks that support families, promote social connectedness, and help children grow within a community with long-term investment in that child’s well-being.

Any healthcare provider will tell you that children benefit from stability in their relationships and in the settings (family, neighborhood, school or child care) they spend time in. When there is turbulence in those settings, they react negatively. Thus, researchers say, “it is reasonable to consider whether frequent moves are harmful to children. Young children may have considerable vulnerability to frequent moves because of their rapid development in multiple domains (physiological, cognitive, affective). as well their dependence on parents’ own abilities to cope with stressful events.”²

For children and teens, the research is clear: Displacement and moving are associated with multiple negative social determinants of health. Some research even finds that these negative outcomes persist well into midlife.³ I’ll attempt to summarize the literature briefly.

1. Increased mental health concerns. A 2003 study⁴ found that families who faced residential instability and moved 3 or more times had children with higher rates of major depression onset, recurrence and remission through the age of 14.

2. Increased substance abuse problems. A 1998⁵ study of 3,700 young adults found highly significant positive relationships between relocation and early initiation of illicit drugs including marijuana, hallucinogens, crack/cocaine, and illicit use of prescribed drugs particularly among males.

3. Greater food insecurity. In a 2011 study¹, children and their families who moved often were 2-3 times more likely to have had shortages of food in their household.

² David Murphey, Ph.D., Tawana Bandy, B.S., Kristin A. Moore, Ph.D. Frequent Residential Mobility and Young Children’s Well-Being. Child Trends Research Brief January, 2012

³ Bures RM. Childhood residential stability and health at midlife. Am J Public Health 2003;93(7): 1144-1148

⁴ Gilman SE, Kawachi I, Fitzmaurice GM, Buka L. Socio-economic status, family disruption and residential stability in childhood: relation to onset, recurrence and remission of major depression. Psychol Med 2003;33(8): 1341-1355

⁵ DeWit DJ. Frequent childhood geographic relocation: its impact on drug use initiation and the development of alcohol and other drug-related problems among adolescents and young adults. Addict Behav 1998;23(5): 623-634

4. Increased physical health concerns. In a 2011 study¹, very young children in households with multiple moves had worse health statuses as reported by their caregivers, increased developmental risks, and lower than expected weight for their ages. The authors state that “the negative growth differences in this group of very young children are cause for concern.”

5. Increased behavior problems and school performance. Two studies^{6,7} found that compared with children who had never moved, children who moved more than twice were 2.3 times more likely to have received psychological help, 1.7 times more likely to have repeated a grade, 1.9 times more likely to have been suspended or expelled from school, and 1.6 times more likely to score in the top tenth percentile on a measure called the Behavior Problem Index. Later, a different set of authors found that adolescents who experience school moves are 50% more likely not to graduate from high school.¹ Researchers concluded that mobility was *more significant in negative school outcomes than any parent socio-demographic factors* because it resulted in the loss or weakening of social bonds and networks.

I want to emphasize that housing insecurity affects poor children and children of color disproportionately. Indeed, research has shown that poor families are likely to move 2 to 5 times more than middle-income and affluent families, and that black families are almost twice as likely to have moved 5 or more times compared to white families.²

I firmly believe that the study of health and psychology has a great deal to offer housing and zoning professionals. It paints a very vivid picture about the critical health concerns that *one more displacement* would mean for families at Brookland Manor. I entrust the burden of my findings to your Commission to protect the well-being of young people and families who fear displacement. I trust that any proposal for displacement will demonstrate the difficult task of mitigating negative outcomes for the children and families who reside on the property in question. Thank you for listening to my testimony.

Appendix. Summary of Relevant Qualifications

⁶ Simpson GA, Fowler MG. Geographic mobility and children's emotional/behavioral adjustment and school functioning. *Pediatrics* 1994;93(2):303-309.

⁷ Wood D, Halfon N, Scarlata D, Newacheck P, Nessim S. Impact of family relocation on children's growth, development, school function and behavior. *JAMA* 1993;270(11):1334-1338.

EDUCATION

- May 2012 **University of Miami**, Coral Gables, FL
Doctor of Philosophy, Counseling Psychology (APA Accredited)
Recipient of Barbara Marks Scholarship
Inducted into Alpha Epsilon Lambda National Graduate Honor Society
Dissertation On becoming and being a homeless youth activist
Clinical focus Disconnected adolescents and young adults
Research interests Adolescent empowerment and resilience, Intentionality of care in youth institutions, Community well-being and social justice, Program design and intervention with unaccompanied minors; Ethical and social implications of immigration discourse
- May 2005 **Boston College**, Chestnut Hill, MA
Master of Arts, Counseling Psychology
Comprehensive Exam Passed with Distinction
- June 2003 **Northwestern University**, Evanston, IL
Bachelor of Arts, Psychology, Minor Biological Anthropology, Certificate Service Learning
Recipient of Class of 1912 Endowed Scholarship, Dean's List

SUMMARY OF RELEVANT QUALIFICATIONS

Psychological Training and Practice

- I am a Licensed Professional Counselor in the District of Columbia since 2011 (license # PRC14208)
- I obtained my Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from Boston College in Chestnut Hill, MA in 2005. I obtained my Ph.D in Counseling Psychology from the University of Miami in Coral Gables, FL in 2012. Through supervised practice, part- and full-time internships, volunteer roles, and full-time staff positions, I have counseled and assessed children, adolescents, adults, and families since 2004 in Massachusetts, Florida, and the District of Columbia. Many of the clients I have treated have high levels of trauma and residential instability
- In 2011, I completed my doctoral internship at the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, treating and assessing youth involved in the juvenile justice system. I administered, wrote and submitted over 60 forensic evaluations to the Superior Court of the District of Columbia between 2010 and 2011, ranging from psychological, violence-risk, and psychosexual evaluations to assessments of trial competency in adolescents and adults
- Since 2011, I have conducted court-ordered evaluations as a sub-contractor for the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation, assessing mental health and risk of reoffending with adults on probation, parole, or pre-trial incarceration. Since 2012, I have been a member of the Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) Asylum Network, conducting more than fifteen psychological evaluations with asylum seekers who by definition have endured both residential displacement and trauma
- Currently, I work full time as the Assistant Director of the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students in Washington, DC. I advise within and outside of the association on best practices to promote high quality graduate training to advance the field and discipline of psychology and improve care to recipients of psychological services

Leadership in Youth Homelessness

- In 2007, I began volunteering as a street outreach counselor with a program named StandUp For Kids which served homeless and runaway youth in Miami
- I became the executive director of this program in 2008 and served for 25 years in this capacity Under my leadership, the program won an annual award of distinction from the organization's national support center and I won two annual awards as its leader Also during my tenure, the program doubled its budget, built an advisory council, established collaborative relationships and MOUs with several youth-serving organizations and institutions, directly assembled and convened the first-ever Miami Task Force For Homeless Youth, grew our street outreach from one night to three nights per week, expanded training and capacity so that we could also serve sexually trafficked youth, opened a multi-service drop-in program that operated once per week, and developed a mentoring program in partnership with the area's runaway youth shelter, a model which continues to be adopted by other programs to this day.
- I have served in various capacities for StandUp For Kids at the national level. I served on the metrics and outcomes committee and co-chaired the training committee, which overhauled and revamped our national training standards and curriculum to focus on trauma-informed care, cultural awareness, positive youth development, and motivational interviewing among 27 other competencies I currently serve on the national board of directors and have been charged with overseeing, across eighteen programs coast to coast, our training processes and standards for frontline volunteers and counselors who serve homeless children, youth, and young adults in various capacities
- I have volunteered on the executive leadership team of StandUp For Kids—DC since 2011, focusing mainly on strategic planning, leadership development, and training all qualified volunteers to directly serve youth as counselors through street outreach, a drop-in center, and mentoring initiatives I conduct two training each month
- Our team co-developed a mentoring program that paired trained mentors with children (K-8) in three different DC public schools that were identified as being in or emerging from homeless by their school's social workers and/or McKinney-Vento liaisons
- From 2013-2014, I co-facilitated and co-wrote "A Bold Strategy to End Youth Homelessness in In the District of Columbia," a multi-pronged prevention and intervention plan that the city adopted in part at a funding level of \$15 Million This was an historic moment when homeless youth providers in the city came together to agree on a set of necessary changes would lead to a wider safety net for homeless youth.
- Through my work as Chair of the DC Center for the LGBT Community's Youth Working Group, I wrote some of the language for DC's LGBTQ Homeless Youth Reform Act and helped steward its passage in 2014
- I have delivered numerous oral and written testimonies to city and state legislative bodies over the last six years on issues related to homelessness and the rights of marginalized youth and families.

Related Research and Public Speaking Experience

- I have authored/co-authored and published six peer-reviewed, academic journal articles, book chapters, a dissertation, and one book on topics such as ethnographies with homeless adults, vocational counseling for youth in juvenile detention, and theoretical models of family resilience Key publications include
 - Provenzo Jr, E F, **Ameen, E.**, Wilkinson, L, Bengochea, A, Doorn, K, Pontier, R., & Sembante, S (2013) *StreetWays. Chronicling the homeless in Miami* Miami: Community and Educational Studies Press
 - Mackelprang, J L, Lennertz, L E, **Ameen, E.**, & Hardie R A (2010, March) Meeting the needs of homeless youth in the school system Paper presented at the National Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention, Chicago, IL
- For over ten years, I have presented dozens of lectures at 33 national conferences and gatherings of professionals in youth development and psychology communities, including keynote addresses and workshops Key presentations include
 - Myers, A, **Ameen, E.**, & Ayuk, G (November 2011) The effects of child maltreatment on neurological development and the implication of future mental health issues Workshop presented at the Parent/Professional Empowerment Conference, Mitchellville, MD

- Provenzo Jr, E F, Wilkinson, L, **Ameen, E.**, Bengochea, A, Doorn, K, Pontier, R., & Sembiante, S (October, 2010) *StreetWays* Chronicling the homeless in Miami. Panel discussion and presentation at the American Educational Studies Association Annual Conference, Denver, CO
- **Ameen, E.** (October, 2010) *Art and Science Working with Homeless Youth and Working with What Works* Workshop hosted at the Annual StandUp For Kids National Conference, Las Vegas, NV
- **Ameen, E.** (May, 2010) *In two worlds* A doctoral student and non-profit director leverages support for homeless youth Poster session at the Campus-Community Partnerships for Health 11th Annual National Conference, Portland, OR.
- **Ameen, E.** (May, 2010) *Youth mentoring programs* Workshop hosted at the Annual StandUp For Kids National Conference, Denver, CO
- **Ameen, E.** (May, 2010) *Becoming better advocates* Workshop hosted at the Annual StandUp For Kids National Conference, Denver, CO
- Aldarondo, E, Dulen, S, **Ameen, E.**, & Castro, M (October 2008) *Promoting the well-being of unaccompanied immigrant children through a community-university partnership* Workshop presented at the 8th Annual Diversity Challenge, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA
- **Ameen, E.** (2008, February) *Intervening with Homeless and Street Kids* Workshop presented at the East Coast Hunger and Homelessness Conference Miami, FL.
- I edit and write regularly for a national blog of the American Psychological Association In the past, I was a regular writer for a national best-practices blog managed by the Forum for Youth Investment

PROMINENT WORK HISTORY

- Nov 2011 – Present **American Psychological Association, Washington, DC**
Assistant Director, American Psychological Association of Graduate Students
- Serve as second in command of a 27,000+ member arm of a non-profit organization of psychology graduate students, providing administrative oversight and guidance to multiple student committees
 - Lead development of strategic planning initiatives to promote high quality graduate training experiences for students who will become practitioners and researchers
 - Continually dialogue with and educate students on issues ranging from financial literacy educational choice, and mentoring to professional development, competency development and policy advisement
- Sept 2011 – Present **Campbell Psychological Services, Silver Spring, MD**
Psychological Associate (Supervisor. Kimberly Campbell, Ph D)
- Conduct up to 6 court-ordered mental health assessments monthly for adults on probation and in pre-trial detention via a subcontract with the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation, and submit written reports with 1-2 week turnaround
 - Assess on measures of personality, cognitive ability, substance use, and recidivism
- August 2010 – July 2011 **Child Guidance Clinic, DC Superior Court, Washington, DC**
Doctoral Intern (APA Accredited, Supervisor Malcolm Woodland, Ph D)
- Performed over 60 forensic test batteries (psychological, educational, violence risk, etc)
 - Maintained individual therapy caseload of 6-8 youth on juvenile probation
 - Co-facilitated a men's group at Howard University Counseling Center
 - Co-facilitated groups for youth charged with sexual assault crimes and their parents
 - Performed therapy at a child advocacy center and competency assessments with adults
- Feb 2008 – July 2010 **Stand Up For Kids, Miami, FL Chapter**
Executive Director
- Directed a non-profit program for homeless youth that provided life-skills mentoring, street outreach, a drop-in program, prevention workshops, and local and state advocacy

- Personally addressed immediate and ongoing needs of youth transitioning off the street.
- Created and convened the Miami Task Force for Homeless Youth
- Formed relationships with local providers and agencies to increase available services
- Engaged daily in all aspect of non-profit management Program development, staff training and supervision, board formation, fundraising, marketing, and public speaking

August 2007 –
July 2010

University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL

Graduate Assistant (Mentor Dr Etiony Aldarondo)

- Co-facilitated a strengths-based group with 10-15 Spanish-speaking adolescents in a shelter for unaccompanied minors, researched, designed, and piloted interventions
- Researched and prepared manuscripts related to acculturation, immigration, and culture
- Applied methods of grounded theory and ethnography to understand unaccompanied youths' narratives and emerging practices in community well-being

August 2008 –
July 2010

Miami Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center, Miami, FL

Doctoral Practicum Trainee (Supervisor Leslie Swanson, Psy D)

- Performed brief strengths-based psychotherapy with a minimum of six clients
- Created and facilitated a writing workshop with 10 males, whose works were published
- Advocated for and assisted youth and their families in navigating the justice system
- Formed case conceptualizations and evidence-based treatment objectives

Aug 2007 –
Aug 2008

UM Institute for Individual and Family Counseling, Coral Gables, FL

Clinic Assistant Manager and Doctoral Trainee (Supervisor Brian Lewis, Ph.D)

- Oversaw all incoming and outgoing referrals for therapy and psychological testing
- Managed clinic databases, handbooks, and incoming revenue
- Served as a point-person and trainer for new Masters-level student therapists
- Developed a comprehensive resource binder for social services in the Miami area
- Performed psychotherapy with a minimum of three clients
- Participated in weekly individual and group supervision, processing cases, discussing theories and current themes, and offering feedback to peers
- Provided outreach services and grief therapy at a neighborhood health initiative

June 2006 –
July 2007

Advocates Community Counseling, Framingham and Marlborough, MA

Outpatient and Family-Based Clinician (Supervisor Robert Cherney, Ph D)

- Engaged in narrative, family systems, and structured cognitive-behavioral psychotherapy with a caseload of 40 clients and five intensive families requiring stabilization
- Completed intake assessments and multiaxial diagnoses
- Planned therapeutic goals and managed treatment plans for entire caseload
- Received weekly individual and group supervision following ongoing caseload
- Worked creatively as a member of multiple cross-section treatment teams
- Attended seminars and conferences related to treatment modalities and clinical issues

Sept 2004 –
June 2006

Northborough Family and Youth Services, Northborough, MA

Mental Health Counselor and Intern (Supervisor Phyllis Oropallo, L M H C , L M F T)

- Maintained a caseload of 20 individual child, adolescent, and adult clients
- Organized and led therapy groups and coordinated a teen-child mentoring program
- Created and updated agency website
- Formed a successful advocacy campaign to preserve town social service funding

Aug 2003 –
June 2005

Psychiatric Practice of Claude A. Curran, M.D., Fall River, MA
Diagnostic Intake Specialist

- Performed over 300 client intake assessments Took developmental histories and assessed the nature of presenting symptoms
- Developed opiate treatment program under federal compliance guidelines
- Counseled clients in crisis and provided referrals as needed.
- Assisted in disability evaluations and billing, and created new intake forms

RECENT COMMUNITY SERVICE

2015 – Present **StandUp For Kids; *National Board Member***
2013 – Present **DC OSSE Youth Risk Behavior Advisory Board; *Member***
2013 – Present **DC Center for the LGBT Community; *Member, Board of Directors***
2012 – Present **DC Center for the LGBT Community; *Chair, Youth Working Group***
2012 – Present **Physicians for Human Rights Asylum Network; *Psychological Evaluator***
2012 – Present **DC Alliance of Youth Advocates Homeless Youth Strategy Team, *Co-Facilitator***
2010 – Present **StandUp For Kids DC; *Director of Counselor Training***
2010 – 2012 **StandUp For Kids National Office; *Outcomes and Metrics Committee Member, Training Standards Committee Co-Chair***
2010 – 2012 **National Alliance to End Homelessness - Homeless Youth Working Group; *Member***
2010 – 2012 **Sasha Bruce Youthwork; *Mentor, Group Facilitator***
2010 – 2012 **APA Committee on LGBT Concerns; *Graduate Student Mentor***
2010 – 2012 **SparkAction.Org (Forum for Youth Investment); *Editorial Contributor***

RECENT AWARDS

September 2014 **Excellence Award, DC Concerned Providers Coalition, Washington, DC**
June 2011 **Individual Community Engagement Nomination, Annual Classy Awards**
May 2011 **Person of the Day, Huffington Post**
October 2010 **Guardian of the Kids Award, StandUp For Kids, Las Vegas, NV**
June 2009 **Carolyn Garwood Award for Service, University of Miami, Coral Gables, FL**
May 2010 **Executive Director of the Year, StandUp For Kids, Denver, CO**
May 2010 **Program of the Year, StandUp For Kids, Denver, CO**

CURRENT PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

2002 – Present **American Psychological Association**
2011 – Present **Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (APA Div. 9)**
2011 – Present **Society of Counseling Psychology (APA Div. 17)**