

METROPOLITAN AREA RELIGIOUS COALITION OF CINCINNATI

MARCC Proposed Comments on Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)
“PHA Annual Plan FY 2009”
Public Comment April 14, 2009

MARCC is the way 17 Denominations work together and speak in one voice on social concerns that affect the residents of Metropolitan Cincinnati. Our mission is to forgo the luxury of separate ways when a common path can be found. My name is Margaret Fox, Executive Director of MARCC. One of the major concerns of MARCC is Homelessness and Affordable Housing. This Statement approved by the MARCC Board is in response to the Public Housing Authority Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2009. We encourage Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority to do three things to make public housing better for people who need it the most.

Comments re: PHA Annual Plan FY 2009

1. Maximize all available funds for PHA units, subsidized units, and Housing Choice Vouchers

MARCC urges CMHA to do everything allowable by HUD and other authorities to maximize available funds, resources, and programs to carry out the mandate to provide housing for low income households. This includes PHA, subsidized, and Housing Choice Voucher units. In the short term, this could begin to house those on the unconsciously long waiting lists (9214 households), and in the long term help close the gap between need and units as identified by the Consolidated Plan and manifest in the length of waiting lists. MARCC sees this as a matter of moral obligation to those who are poor and need housing, and to our mutual purposes to promote a humane community.

2. Working Family Preference

In these times of economic crisis, job losses, and high unemployment, MARCC questions the retention of the Working Family Preference (pp 32-33) in the Plan for FY 2009 for both Housing Choice Vouchers and Public Housing programs. The requirement of full-time “continuously employed” for 12 months or six months places additional hardships on those whose work has disappeared or is intermittent. MARCC recommends expansion of the Working Family Preference to include those who have been laid-off or who are still working with hours reduced to less than 30 per week or is not continuous throughout the 12 or six month periods.

3. Community Advisory Council

CMHA comes under public scrutiny from stakeholders as well as detractors that often interfere with the Authority’s ability to carry out its public responsibility to provide housing for low income households. MARCC urges CMHA to develop an advisory council widely representative of the community including representation from tenants and neighbors of tenants, neighborhood groups, housing advocates, social service providers, the religious community, and others with a stake in housing. The recommended role for this group is advisory and supportive of efforts to maximize the housing options for those with low incomes.