



# Newsletter

## *PHRN Resident Leaders Fight to Save Section 8 in Washington, DC*

PHRN public housing resident leaders Maritza Pelletier and Yul Watley joined hundred of others in Washington, DC to express outrage at HUD's decision not to provide public housing authorities (PHAs) enough funding in 2004, which could cause families to immediately lose their Section 8 vouchers. The residents were part of a larger group of 500 who were in Washington, DC attending the National Low Income Housing Coalition's Annual Conference April 26-27.



Maritza Pelletier of Hartford and Yul Watley of New Haven rally at HUD Headquarters in Washington, DC on April 26.

During the conference, a contingent of public housing residents from across the country - and Puerto Rico - along with other advocates took part in a peaceful rally in front of HUD headquarters on April 26. The rally was in response to a recent HUD notice to PHAs which could cause the immediate loss of Section 8 vouchers.

In Fiscal Year 2004, Congressional appropriations for HUD included an extra \$1 billion to fully fund all existing Section 8 vouchers in the United States. However, a new HUD ruling released on April 22 retroactively cuts voucher funding, which supports many families across the US. The HUD release notified voucher administrators

*...continued on page 3*

## ***Bush Administration Proposes "Freedom to House" Initiative for 2005***

The Bush Administration's 2005 budget submitted to Congress includes a new program for public housing authorities (PHAs) called "Freedom to House." The program is meant to succeed and revamp HUD's Moving-to-Work program enacted in 1996 and still is ongoing in many housing authorities, including the New Haven Housing Authority.

Similar to the Moving-to-Work program, the Freedom to House program would waive certain public housing regulations in an effort to ease federal restriction on PHAs. Those agencies participating in the Freedom to House initiative would be allowed to combine their use of capital and operating funds, the local housing authority could determine its own rent structures, free themselves of federal reporting requirements and shift to asset-based management practices.

This proposal would apply to up to 50 PHAs. Another 50 PHAs denied acceptance to be a Freedom to House agency would be the control group. At the conclusion of the experiment, the two groups would be compared to one another.

Another change proposed by the Bush Administration for Fiscal Year 2005 is to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. HUD wants to change to program into a Flexible Voucher Program, which will block grant voucher funds to PHAs. (This differs from last year's proposal to block grant the funds to states.)

Under this proposal, PHAs would be granted wide latitude in how they would want to use the voucher dollars. Currently, vouchers are targeted to low-income households (75% must go to households at 30% of the area median income or less). Under the Flexible Voucher Program, income targeting for all vouchers would increase to 80% of the area median income. Additionally, PHAs would be allowed to develop their own rent systems, which could potentially exempt the PHAs from complying with the "Brooke Rule" that limits tenants' portion of the rent to 30% of the tenants' income.

### ***Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Fast Facts***

- **Voting machines must give voters the opportunity to fix any mistakes they might have made on their ballot.**
- **Each polling place must have at least one voting machine for the disabled and must post a voter's bill of rights.**
- **Any eligible voter who shows up at the polls must be allowed to vote, even if his or her name does not show up on the voter registration rolls. Each "provisional" vote will then be counted if it is confirmed that the voter should legitimately have been on the list of registered voters.**

### ***Who We Are & What We Do***

The Public Housing Resident Network provides a variety of assistance to residents of public housing in Connecticut. The Network informs residents of new and important state and federal policy information and is a source of mutual support for residents.

Founded in the fall of 1996, the Network is an informal organization open to participation from any public housing resident - whether elected leadership or interested resident. We welcome requests for services from residents and public housing authorities. The services we provide are free of charge to the residents and we encourage you to attend our Network meetings.

This newsletter is mailed to those who are on our mailing list. Contact us to be added to our mailing list. All we ask in return is your participation and interest!

## Residents Speak Out on Recent Section 8 Scare

*continued from page 1...*

that it will fund Section 8 vouchers only at Aug. 1, 2003 levels, adjusted for inflation. HUD approved, but is refusing to release, inflation adjustment funds.

This unexpected change in the middle of a fiscal year has caught many housing authorities off guard, without sufficient time and resources to plan for implementation of the new regulations. In addition, HUD is will not pay many PHAs their overdue reserves, leaving them without sufficient funds to cover the emerging shortfalls. These PHAs will be forced to make drastic cuts to families receiving housing assistance.

The impact of these changes will have serious impacts on families and children. Rent levels for voucher holders may increase. Maximum rents covered by vouchers may decrease. Vouchers may be directed to higher-income households. PHAs may not reissue vouchers when tenants leave. PHAs may withdraw vouchers from families who have them but have not yet found a willing landlord.

These changes are in addition to the Bush administration's FY05 budget proposal that cuts 250,000 existing vouchers nationwide. In Connecticut, it is estimated that more than 4,000 low-income families could lose federal vouchers under proposed funding cuts, which is a projected loss to the state of \$31.4 million in 2005.

"This is a complete outrage!" proclaimed Yul Watley, president of New Haven's Westville Manor public housing development. "I'm not even a Section 8 resident but the thought of thousands of children and babies on the streets just hurts me and moves me to action," said Yul. "Here are all of these residents out there who have these Section 8 certificates thinking their housing is secure and tomorrow it may be gone."

Maritza Pelletier, vice president of Hartford's Dutch Point also expressed disappointment. "My development is being torn down due to a HOPE VI grant. While I'm waiting for it to be rebuilt, I have to take a Section 8 voucher," said Maritza. "I'm worried now about what happens if there are not Section 8 vouchers. Where will the people in my development go?"

Maritza and Yul met with most of the congressional delegation from Connecticut, including Senators Joseph Lieberman and Christopher Dodd personally. Both senators expressed outrage over the current Section 8 crisis and pledged to help.

*If you are interested in working on the current voucher crisis, please contact Lynne Ide at 860-563-2943 or [lynne@ct-housing.org](mailto:lynne@ct-housing.org).*

### *Recipe of the Month*

#### *Banana-Strawberry Smoothies*

##### **Ingredients**

- 2 ripe small bananas
- 1 cup frozen unsweetened whole strawberries
- 1 8-ounce carton vanilla low-fat yogurt
- 3/4 cup milk

##### **Directions**

1. Peel bananas. Cut bananas into chunks. Place banana chunks, frozen strawberries, yogurt, and milk into a blender container.
2. Cover blender and blend on high speed about 1 minute or until mixture is smooth. Turn off blender. Pour drink into 2 glasses. If desired, serve with pieces of toast spread with peanut butter. Makes 2 servings.

##### **Nutritional Information**

Nutritional facts per serving  
calories: 259, total fat: 5g, saturated fat: 3g, cholesterol: 13mg, sodium: 113mg, carbohydrate: 49g, fiber: 3g, protein: 9g

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION INSIDE ABOUT  
PROPOSED SECTION 8 CUTS!!**

Issue 1

4

Apr. '04

Connecticut Housing Coalition  
Public Housing Resident Network  
30 Jordan Lane  
Wethersfield, CT. 06109  
phone: 860.563.2943  
fax: 860.529.5176  
email: PHRN@ct-housing.org  
website: [Http://www.phrn.org](http://www.phrn.org)

