

Representative Shelley Moore Capito, M.C.
“Review of the Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Program”
April 10, 2002
Room 2128 Rayburn House Office Building

ORAL TESTIMONY

Madam Chairwoman, Ranking Member Mr. Frank, at this time, I would like to begin by thanking you for holding this all-important hearing on the current status of the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community program. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and support that my colleague Mr. Rahall and his staff have performed on behalf of the EZ/EC program in our home state of West Virginia.

In 1997, while serving as a state delegate in the West Virginia Legislature, a portion of my district known as the Upper Kanawha Valley in Kanawha County, along with portions of Fayette County in Mr. Rahall’s Congressional district, competed with numerous other community development groups from around the country for selection to receive federal grant funding as a designated Round II Enterprise Community. My fellow members, it gives me great pleasure to sit here before you today some 5 years later to give evidence and report on the remarkable progress and achievements that have been realized by that same determined and highly successful economic development group now known as the Upper Kanawha Valley Enterprise Community.

It is worth noting that, in the last 4 years alone, the Upper Kanawha Valley Enterprise Community has been recognized as a top 5 Enterprise Community nationally that has skillfully leveraged an astounding \$84 million in private-sector investment and state and local matching funds for the \$1 million in federal grant funding that the UKVEC has received over the past 4 years.

As you will soon learn here today, the hard work carried out by those associated with the Upper Kanawha Valley Enterprise Community has been demonstrated in countless acts of volunteerism and community development. From a new small business incubator to health clinics and community centers, the local residents, business owners, elected officials, and UKVEC staff have all truly made the Upper Kanawha Valley Enterprise Community an indispensable tool for economic development as one of this nation’s more successful EC’s!

In closing, I would like to state for the record my sincere appreciation and full support for Representative Lobiondo’s hard work and dedication in introducing H.R. 2637, the “Round II EZ/EC Flexibility Act of 2001.” If we truly value all of the progress and economic development resulting from the EZ/EC program, then we must enact a measure that both secures continued funding and maintains flexibility. H.R. 2637 would restore and safeguard adequate funding levels while allowing each individual EC and EZ to continue implementing their own economic development plans within a framework that works best for their particular regional character and

makeup. I know just how successful these programs have been because I have seen their potential first hand, and if we have to hold these funding deliberations again next year or the year after that, then I will gladly come before this committee to voice my full support for the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community program. Thank you Madam Chairwoman.