

DRAFT STATEMENT  
FREEHOLDER DIRECTOR, JAMES SAURO  
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SUBC.  
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, 2002, 2:00PM

As the Cumberland county Freeholder Director, I dream of creating a program that would benefit the citizens of Cumberland County. You have created such program; a program that I would like to say was my idea. In Cumberland County we have one of the highest unemployment rates, lowest per capita income and I am sorry to say one of the highest tax rates in NJ.

Over the years businesses have been slowly leaving our area, but along came a fantastic opportunity named the Cumberland County Empowerment Zone, a program that you created, a program that provided the flexibility and the foresight to meet the needs of our community and a

program that has already had a significant and long lasting impact to our county.

Cumberland County is finally moving forward with the assistance of the empowerment zone. By having the empowerment zone and the Urban Enterprise Zone work hand in hand we are able to offer and entice businesses to come to our community. In just a short time we have created over 300 jobs, expanded existing businesses and helped a number of non-profit organizations that serve the citizens of Cumberland County. I want you to imagine having a great idea that you would like to implement and start on your own, but after completing a business plan you realize that you just cant quite make your payments to the bank. Now you find out about a program that allows you to have access to capital at a low interest rates, that gives you tax incentives for being in that area and that gives you

incentives for hiring people from that area. Now you get all of those savings and put them into the business plan and you realize that you can open that business because you can now make the payments. You are not only able to open your new business, but now you are revitalizing the area, and hiring individuals from that area. Again, making people and yourself self-sufficient.

Cumberland County is moving in right direction. If funding were not continued, all the good that has been done and the initiatives that have been started would be in vain. We have number of projects that we wish to implement and business people are waiting for answers that would lead to additional jobs and ratables, but we can't give them answers because we need answers from you.

It is Easy to think of this program as just job creation, but it is not. It is creating a quality way of life allowing people to

have confidence in themselves by making them able to take care of their families on their own. It also brings pride back to the community and changes peoples' attitudes from maybe it can't be done to how do we make it happen. When peoples' attitudes change, positive things happen.

I will now allow the Executive Director of the Cumberland Empowerment Zone to give exact details and figures of the program and its successes. Hopefully, after hearing his and the other testimony, you will understand how important this program is to our community. Please continue to keep the American dream going by giving people a chance to own their own businesses and to become self-sufficient. You are doing that right now with the Empowerment Zone. Thank you.