

Testimony of LaToya N. Fisher before The House Subcommittee on Housing and
Community Opportunity.
Columbus, Ohio
July 29, 2003

Chairman Ney and the distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to testify on the subject of the Housing Choice Voucher Program and the role of the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority and how it has been beneficial to me.

My name is LaToya N. Fisher. I reside at 3035 Osgood Rd. W, Columbus, Ohio 43232. I am a 26 year old single parent to four children, two of which I have adopted. I am currently employed at Ross Laboratories and attend The Ohio State School of Cosmetology. My future goals are to complete the course at this school to receive a certificate of completion in Technology and further my education to obtain a degree in nursing.

At this point, I do not have the knowledge to comment on the national implications of changing the Housing Choice Voucher Program, but I would like to share with you my experience as a participant in CMHA's Housing Choice Voucher Program.

I applied for Section 8 assistance in 1996. At that time, my son and I were living at home with my mother and father and I wanted to live on my own. I received my Voucher several months after completing my application and I was successful in finding an apartment to fulfill my living needs at that time. Two years later, I had another child and moved into a house.

I enrolled in the CMHA Family Self Sufficiency Program in February 2003. I was able to obtain information about this program through my realtor. This program was the beginning of me becoming a first time homebuyer. I was able to achieve this goal on May 23, 2003. With out CMHA's Home Ownership Program, I would not have been able to achieve this goal so soon in my life. Because of the benefits from this program I was able to find a home in a nice neighborhood and a stable environment for my children.

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I am grateful to HUD and CMHA for the assistance provided for my family and myself. With the housing assistance, I am able to pay for school, and afford the cost of everyday living for my family.

Since I have started this program, I've built a strong relationship with the Coordinators of the FSS Program (Carol Winchester and Michelle Barthelemy). Throughout the process of finding my home, I have had to speak with either one or both of these ladies on a daily basis, so I would know which steps to take next. I am proud to day that I am very pleased with my relationship with CMHA. The staff is friendly, courteous, and professional. CMHA provides a valuable resource to our community. I would not want any changes to the Housing Choice Voucher Program that would reduce its current impact upon the thousands of Housing Choice participants who live in Columbus.

However I would like to make a few suggestions on how to improve the program and weed out the people who don't plan to better their lives with the help of this program:

1. Require all able body individuals to work or attend school at least 30 hours per week. With responsibility these people will find a sense of self-importance in their lives and not live by society standards, but want to achieve more in life.
2. Take more of an aggressive stance on participants and landlords that are not following CMHA's rules.
3. Have the landlord attend the inspections with the inspectors so that they will understand clearly what is necessary to fix and why. Hold payment on landlords that doesn't keep up on routine maintenance.
4. Find a way to acknowledge the workers for the hard work they do.

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5. If possible, give more CMHA vouchers to assist families that are motivated to better their lives and current situation so that one day they can also live out the American Dream and become an home owner also.

I would like to thank you once again for your time and interest. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have about my comments and suggestions.

Respectfully yours,

LaToya Fisher