

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ELDERLY HOUSING QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACT

HON. JOHN J. LaFALCE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 1999

Mr. LaFALCE. Mr. Speaker, today, I plan to introduce the "Elderly Housing Quality Improvement Act." I am pleased to be joined in this effort by ranking Banking Committee Democrats VENTO, KANJORSKI, and FRANK, as well as many other co-sponsors.

According to HUD's "Worse Case Housing Needs" study, 1.5 million elderly households pay over 50% of their income for rent or live in severely substandard housing. As our nation ages, and as our affordable housing stock continues to shrink, this problem is likely to get worse.

The Elderly Housing Quality Improvement Act addresses this growing crisis through targeted funding increases and legislative changes designed to update and expand our stock of elderly housing, and to improve the quality of life of low-income seniors.

As affordable elderly housing units built in the 1970's and 1980's have aged, project sponsors, many of them non-profits, all too often lack the resources for adequate repair and maintenance. The first goal of the Elderly Housing Quality Improvement Act is to give these sponsors additional tools and resources to properly maintain elderly housing.

Most dramatically, the bill creates a new grant program for capital repairs for federally assisted elderly housing units, to be funded at \$100 million a year. Funds would be awarded on a competitive basis, based on the need for the proposed repairs, the financial need of the applicant, and the impact on the tenants for failure to make such repairs.

The bill also amends existing programs to improve the quality of elderly housing units. It facilitates the refinancing of high interest rate Section 202 elderly housing projects, by guaranteeing that at least half of refinancing savings, plus all excess reserve funds, may be retained for the benefit of the tenants or for the benefit of the project.

The bill contains an innovative approach to accelerate the availability of 1997 Mark-to-Market Section 531 recapture grant funds, to enable affordable housing sponsors to make large capital expenditures. The bill also makes all federally assisted housing projects eligible for such grants. And, the bill increases annual income for non federally insured Section 236 affordable housing projects, by letting them keep "excess income."

The second major goal of the bill is to make assisted living facilities more available and affordable to low income elderly. Assisted living facilities provide meals, health care, and other services to frail senior citizens who need assistance with activities of daily living. Unfortu-

nately, poorer seniors who can't afford assisted living facilities are instead forced to move into nursing homes—with a lower quality of life at a higher cost.

In order to overcome this affordability problem, the bill makes conversion of federally assisted elderly housing to assisted living facilities an eligible activity under the newly created capital grant program. It also authorizes the use of Section 8 vouchers to pay the rental component of any assisted living facility. This would make the 200,000 elderly now receiving vouchers eligible to use them in assisted living facilities.

The legislation also authorizes 15,000 incremental vouchers, on a demonstration basis, for low income seniors for use in assisted living facilities. These vouchers are to be made available to ten state housing finance agencies or local public housing agencies.

Funds may be used so that an elderly tenant in project-based Section 8 project-based housing who needs assistance with activities of daily living may receive a new voucher to move to an assisted living facility. The vouchers may also be used to incentivize construction of assisted living facilities which agree to serve low-income seniors.

This demonstration would give us the opportunity to analyze whether authorizing additional Section 8 vouchers for this purpose might actually reduce government spending, by reducing the level of Medicaid expenditures that would otherwise be expended by the state and federal government in a nursing home setting.

Third, the bill promotes the use of service coordinators, which help elderly and disabled tenants gain access to local community services, thereby promoting independence. This bill doubles funding for grants for service coordinators in federally assisted housing, and lets service coordinators serve other low-income seniors in a local community. It also provides funds for new public housing service coordinator grants, and mandates renewal of all expiring grants, including those grants not renewed in the FY 1998 lottery.

Finally, the bill seeks to expand our stock of affordable housing for the elderly, by increasing Section 202 new construction of elderly housing by \$50 million. It also encourages appropriators to consider demonstration projects which encourage the leveraging of funds from other sources, such as from tax credit deals, and to encourage the development of additional housing which is affordable for moderate income elderly.

Earlier this year, the Chairmen of the Housing Subcommittee and Banking Committee introduced H.R. 202, which deals with the worthy goal of "conversion" of Section 202 elderly housing projects. The Elderly Housing Quality Improvement Act complements H.R. 202, and simply gives elderly housing sponsors additional tools to carry out their mission. It is my hope that Democrats and Republicans can

work together in a bi-partisan fashion to adopt the best of all these proposals and enact them into law.

THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FAIRVIEW COMMUNITY CHURCH

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 1999

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honor of the 75th Anniversary of the Fairview Community Church for their outstanding service to the Cleveland area for the past 75 years.

Starting as just a Sunday School, with an enrollment of 129 people, the church grew to accommodate the growing community. On January 27, 1924, the Fairview Christian Union Church was founded with 52 members from 28 families. As the community continued to grow many in the community were unchurched. In addition to expanding to bring more people in to the church the congregation supported Christian missions. Mission giving continues to be an important part of the church's tradition today, over seventy years later.

Membership doubled and in April of 1936, even through hard financial times, the need for a building became apparent. With the support of the Cleveland Baptist Association a new Baptist chapter was formed. On May 2, 1943, even through the financial challenges, the new church building was dedicated.

In its effort to better serve the citizens of Cleveland on October 13, 1968, The Fairview Church merged with the West Shore Baptist Church and became known as the Fairview Community Church. Over the years the church has become an active member in many programs such as FISH, Food For Our Brothers, and the building of Willowood Manor. To help the needy in the area the church is also involved at the Jones Home, St. Paul's Community Church, The City Mission and with the families at Garnett School.

My fellow colleagues join me in honoring The Fairview Community Church for its outstanding commitment to the whole community, and especially the needy in the Cleveland area.

TRIBUTE TO BOY SCOUT TROOP 116

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 29, 1999

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Boy Scout Troop 116 which is celebrating its 50th year of service to

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