

Statement of Chairwoman Sue Kelly; House Committee on Financial Services Joint Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity Hearing on Fighting Discrimination against the Disabled and Minorities Through Fair Housing Enforcement
June 25, 2002; 2:00 p.m.; 2128 Rayburn

This joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity will come to order.

I want to thank all Members of Congress who are present today. Without objection all Members present will participate fully in the hearing and all opening statements and questions will be made part of the official hearing record.

Beyond the issue of availability of affordable housing is the ability of the disabled and minorities to access what housing is currently available. Unfortunately, discrimination continues to be a disturbing problem in our nation which is very apparent in housing. The disabled have a particularly hard time since the wrong housing reduced their ability to function – even in the confines of their own homes. As a nation we have recognized these problems and enacted laws which created agencies dedicated to stopping housing discrimination and ensuring more homes are accessible to the disabled. It is for this reason that I become very frustrated when I read reports which state that these laws are not being enforced and the agencies created to investigate and correct these wrongs have been failing in their job.

One issue I continually hear about when I am in New York is the desperate need for housing for people with disabilities. We have adults who desperately want to get out on their own, who hold jobs, pay taxes and simply have no options for housing. Think about people of slight or profound disability and the courage it takes for them to enter the world on their own. That desire to become an active part of society must not be thwarted by a lack of available, affordable housing.

It is my hope that with today's hearing we can all gain a better understanding of what the issues are which face the disabled and minorities seeking homes and better living conditions within those homes. We will discuss why efforts to enforce fair housing laws have failed and what is and can be done to rectify the situation. Most of all I hope we can agree to work together to renew our efforts to ultimately solve this large problem.

There must be a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination against the disabled and minorities. The need for clean, safe, affordable housing for minorities and the disabled has never been greater. Addressing this housing shortage and fighting discrimination must be a top priority in our nation's housing policy.

I will now recognize my friend from Massachusetts for his opening statement. Mr. Frank....