

Testimony of Beverly J. Martin
Owner/Landlord Housing Units City of Los Angeles
before the
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity
House Committee on Financial Services
July 1, 2003

During the last three years I have been an owner/landlord in the Los Angeles area. This experience is relatively new to me, after retiring from the Los Angeles Unified School District as a former school principal for ten (10) years and as Asst. Superintendent my final seven (7) years. This self-chosen investment has been both invigorating and gratifying.

In a brief period, I have owned a triplex, a 7-unit building and a 29-unit building. All are located in south Los Angeles area with the major concentration of my time being devoted to the 29-unit complex. Of the 29 units, 24 are occupied by Section 8 voucher tenants. I appear before you today as a strong advocate and staunch supporter of the current structure and operation of the present Section 8 voucher program.

It is my understanding that legislation via block grants to states is being considered as an avenue for dissemination of funds for housing. I view this as a deterrent and another unnecessary layer of bureaucracy. The concept would, indeed, bring a negative impact and could prove to be an impediment in providing assistance to those in greatest need of affordable housing.

As a resident of the state of California for 41 years, the state financial crisis has peaked in this state. This is a most inappropriate time to consider shifting these major housing responsibilities to the state. It would be devastating, and would compound the present financial situation in California. Above all, the recipients, those to whom this service is intended, would suffer.

The current local administration of the Section 8 voucher program, though not flawless, is functioning extremely well in this city, and the cliché of "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," is an appropriate statement at this time.

Last week as I read an article in a journal, a thought remained with me. In conclusion, allow me to share that thought with you, and I quote:

"Serious attention must be given to the **awesome task** of helping those who live below the poverty level, if we, as Americans expect to maintain our image as a democracy."

This thought has great merit. I am available to respond to questions and to convey my personal views and opinions regarding the current local administration of the Section 8 voucher program in the Los Angeles area.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.