

*Prepared, not delivered*  
Opening Statement  
**Chairman Michael G. Oxley**  
**Committee on Financial Services**

**Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity**  
**A Hearing Entitled**  
**H.R. 4057, the Samaritan Initiative Act of 2004**

**July 13, 2004**

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Thank you, Chairman Ney, for holding this hearing today on H.R. 4057, the Samaritan Initiative Act of 2004 and I want to commend my colleague from Arizona, Congressman Renzi, for introducing this bill and for his commitment to helping the chronically homeless.

While the overall number of homeless families and individuals in this country is extremely difficult to predict, on any given day, it is estimated that at least 800,000 people are homeless in the U.S. and as many as 2.3 – 3.5 million people experience homelessness at least once during an average year.

Over the last two and three years, cities like Columbus, OH, Philadelphia, and New York have all seen an increase in their numbers in their homeless shelters. While the numbers continue to grow, there is little consensus on why.

Some experts say the numbers are growing due to the widening gap between low incomes and high rents, some attribute the increases to the lack of available, affordable rental housing; and still others believe the increases are due to the failure of a federally built homeless shelter system.

H.R. 4057 will not solve all our homeless problems, it may not even be the only answer to the problems facing the chronically homeless; but it represents an important first step in determining how best to go about fixing the problem. The legislation introduced by Mr. Renzi would create an interagency program to pool housing resources from HUD, supportive services from HHS, and case management support from the VA.

The ultimate goal is to allow communities, urban and rural, to receive housing and supportive services funding together in a single funding stream to address chronic homelessness.

Under the bill, funds would be given to those communities that identify and engage the chronically homeless, and help the chronically homeless move from the streets and out of shelters into permanent housing with supportive services including primary health care, mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Thank you again Chairman Ney for holding today's hearing and Mr. Renzi for introducing this important bipartisan Samaritan Initiative. It is a compassionate, effective alternative to addressing the needs of the chronically homeless.

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