

Mr. WIDNALL. How long a period does it take for you to approve those units? What are you finding your experience to be?

Mrs. MCGUIRE. It is much quicker than the normal public housing. But we do have to be very careful about the supply of available units and the economic situation in the community with respect to public housing.

Mr. WIDNALL. The 3,405 figure represents all that are now pending?

Mrs. MCGUIRE. All for which we have actual applications. We have many cities which have indicated active interest and many cities which are preparing these leasing programs.

Mr. WIDNALL. Would any applications be pending that you do not have at the present time?

Mrs. MCGUIRE. No; I think we show only those from the regional offices that may be in the central office now.

Mr. WIDNALL. What do you estimate could be used this year?

Mrs. MCGUIRE. We have budgeted only 3,000, but you can see we already have exceeded that. And I expect the popularity of the program is such that it would be at least 6,000 before the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. WIDNALL. As I understand it from the new proposals, on page 21 of Dr. Weaver's testimony it says:

The leasing provision is particularly helpful in providing housing for large displaced families, many of which have been on the waiting list for public housing for many years. Local housing authorities cannot assure what will happen to these families when the short-term leases end. Authority to enter into leases with longer terms would prevent further insecurity, and in some cases the actual hardship of any additional displacement for these families.

Now, the proposal as I understand it would make possible 40-year leases in a rent certificate program.

Secretary WEAVER. No; we are not asking for that. We realize that the genius of this proposal is that it is a relatively short-term arrangement. But we feel that 3 years is too short a term, particularly for these people who have been displaced and for whom we have a moral responsibility to give some assurance that they would be adequately housed over a reasonable period. We were thinking in terms of a 10-year period rather than a 20- or 30- or 40-year period.

Mr. WIDNALL. Of course, this is spelled out in the open-end authorization as presently set up in the bill.

Secretary WEAVER. Well, we would be perfectly willing to nail it down to a reasonable period, say, a period of 10 years.

Mr. WIDNALL. Don't you think it would be better to get some reasonable experience out of this before we launch a program?

One of the things I had in mind in offering this program was that we would have an opportunity to experiment with it to see what the results were without freezing into a permanent mold. It differs from rent supplements in that you have a 40-year freeze in on rent supplements. Once you have signed your contracts for rent supplements you have no ability to change during the 40-year period. I thought that the rent certificate idea was something very worthwhile in the overall program. You could use available units which would put people into decent, safe, and sanitary housing much faster than the rent supplement program. Don't you think that it is wise to test