

We particularly commend the demonstration cities concept for its recognition of the need for comprehensive community programming and the need for coordination of Federal assistance programs at the local level. We also particularly endorse the approach of incentives to achieve metropolitan area planning and coordination, as it is contained in the proposed Urban Development Act.

As we give our support to the new demonstration programs, we express a firm belief that the existing programs of housing and urban development are the solid base on which the demonstration programs must be built. The prospects for these existing programs should be as exciting and promising as the prospects for the demonstration cities program. We should have assurance that they will be strengthened where necessary by amendments and funded at a level where they can fulfill their highest potentials, both as part of and independently of the demonstration efforts. It would be ironic and tragic if, in emphasizing what cities can do under the demonstration cities program, we overlooked what is being accomplished even with limited funds under the existing urban renewal and housing programs. I will have some specific recommendations to make in this regard a little later in this testimony.

Mr. Chairman, there are three aspects of the Demonstration Cities Act on which we wish to comment: (1) how the selection process will be handled; (2) the number of cities that can realistically expect to participate in the program; and (3) the area, or areas, that a city can include in its demonstration project.

On the first point, it is our understanding that these demonstrations are meant to provide evidence that "massive" improvements in urban life—on a fast time schedule—can flow from the use of certain techniques of coordinated planning, concentrated action, and pooled financing among many Federal, State, and local agencies. This is a dramatic concept. If we can move into realizing it with the least possible delay, we feel sure there will be widespread national acceptance of an accelerated and expanded community development program that will, at long last, begin to make the kind of impact on urban slums and blight that the mayors who have testified here—as well as our members—have been trying to achieve with limited resources under the existing programs.

To move with dispatch, we think the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development should be given a very flexible formula for selecting demonstration cities. Cities already well advanced in coordinating various community development and social welfare programs would certainly not require a year or more of planning to qualify as a demonstration city: they might well have a qualified application, outlining the dimensions of their proposal, ready shortly after passage of the act.

Further, these demonstrations should take place in cities of varying size, of varying age, of varying geographic location, confronted with varying social and economic problems. In this way lessons would be available to cities of all sizes and conditions. There might well be a demonstration in a city that has, up to now, made no moves toward urban renewal or community development. Thus, we feel that the demonstration aspect should be an important consideration in the selection of cities.