

The findings and purposes of the Demonstration Cities Act go to the very root of the many problems facing cities and city administrations in our Nation today; the need to improve the quality of our urban life, the need to develop better programs for the housing of our low-income population, the continuing deterioration of our residential neighborhoods, and the inability of cities, on their own, to provide the resources necessary to arrest their continuing decay. Perhaps most important among the many problems of our community, and others, is the extreme difficulty in coordinating all of the many Federal, State, and local programs available to us under comprehensive policy direction. H.R. 13292 addresses itself to these matters, and for the first time offers hope to all cities that a comprehensive approach to urban problems can be made.

My own community—Wilmington—is a good example. Indeed, we are looking forward to participating in the demonstration cities program. For despite the fact that we have a strong program for comprehensive planning and are participating in a number of metropolitan planning efforts; for despite the fact that we have an urban renewal program which will take advantage of all Federal and local tools for renewal; for despite the fact that our community action program has pioneered in a number of significant programs; for despite the fact that we have strong and able civic leadership working hand in hand with Government on many community problems; despite all of these facts we need new dimension in our approach to urban blight and decay in the years ahead. In my opinion, this bill takes a giant step toward the fulfillment of our needs.

Another important proposal of this bill is the provision of additional financial assistance to cities to enable them to participate more effectively in existing Federal assistance programs. Let me give you an example from my own community. In developing future capital budget and program requirements resulting from the recommendations of our community renewal program, Wilmington's planning staff estimates that over 75 percent of our capital spending over the next 6-year period must be for urban renewal project contributions or renewal associated public works projects. This means that we will have to defer other important and needed programs such as open space acquisition, improvements to water and sewer facilities, public safety, or nonrenewal associated public works, or reduce our proposed commitment to the renewal program. The added financial assistance proposed in the Demonstration Cities Act will permit us to meet substantially more of our renewal and other community obligations within a reasonable short period. It will also permit us to participate in other Federal grant programs that heretofore have been unavailable due to a lack of local matching funds.

H.R. 13292, introduced by Representative Harris B. McDowell, of Delaware, it seems to me, offers a number of improvements that should be seriously considered by this committee. First of all, section 4 of the bill spells out in a comprehensive way the relationship between existing programs for rebuilding cities and the proposed demonstration cities program. It is absolutely essential, in my opinion, that the new program be a continuation and strengthening of present programs for renewal, both physical and social. Second, I would like to support the concept contained in this bill that the regional directors of the Federal Housing Administration act as the urban coordinator for the metropolitan area in which a demonstration cities program is underway. By placing the primary responsibility for coordination in the regional FHA office, local initiative, local decisionmaking, and local responsibility for these programs will be strengthened.

There are now FHA offices in over 75 of the major cities of our country. They should be intimately involved in the problems in their respective urban areas. Then the danger that a Federal coordinator will become a Federal supervisor should be eliminated.

Let me now make several specific comments on some of the other proposals contained in the bill. First, it seems to me that the demonstration cities program should be extended to all of our Nation's cities, without any regard to size or formula for selection. Any community which meets the requirements of the act deserves an opportunity to participate in the program. Second, I would like to propose that section 5(a) be changed to provide for 100-percent grants for the cost of planning and developing comprehensive city demonstration programs. By raising these grants to 100 percent, our communities will be able to continue local and regional planning activities at the same level as before, and the need to divert valuable professional time to application preparation