

STATEMENT BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE URBAN COALITION
ON
HOUSING AND URBAN RECONSTRUCTION

The Urban Coalition Executive Committee calls upon Congress and the nation to take bold and immediate action to fulfill the national need stated in the Housing Act of 1949 for "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family" with guarantees of equal access to all housing, new and existing.

We believe that the President's urban affairs message and the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 are important contributions to this end--both in clearly stating the urgency of the needs and in creating new avenues of public and private cooperation. A long-range program is vital if we are to have the continuity of effort to plan, coordinate and implement the reconstruction of our cities with maximum effectiveness. We strongly urge Congress and all Americans to support the steps that are so essential to the growth and progress of our nation and its citizens.

A number of measures set forth are major contributions to improving efficiency, increasing scale and encouraging greater involvement of the resources of the private sector. In particular we cite:

- The plans to provide homeownership opportunities for low and moderate income families through flexible interest subsidies linked to family incomes and financed in the private sector.
- The steps to expand rental and cooperative housing for low and moderate income families through flexible interest subsidies linked to family income and the greater encouragement of private sector financing.

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- The provisions for technical assistance and advice to nonprofit sponsors.
- The proposed extension and strengthening of the rent supplement program.
- The extension of the public housing program with increased emphasis on quality and vital related social services. These are much needed improvements.
- The New Communities Act which can be an important step in creating new and balanced living environments.
- The creation of Neighborhood Development Programs to expedite the planning and implementation of urban renewal and rehabilitation.
- The proposed National Housing Partnerships which respond to the need for imaginative vehicles through which private corporations may join together and become more deeply involved in the social and physical aspects of urban development.
- The proposed expansion of the Model Cities Program.
- The emphasis by the President on the need for the passage of effective fair housing legislation.
- The efforts to make the mortgage more attractive and competitive as a financial instrument.
- The expansion and improvement of research and development activities which are crucial to reduce the cost of housing and increase productivity.

The measures outlined by the President are essential if housing and urban reconstruction are to have their just and proper priority. However, we must remember that the reconstruction of our cities involves all aspects of our society and directly affects the lives and well-being of every citizen. The best of ideas are no better than their implementation, and achieving the goals set forth will require a host of other factors.

Efforts to improve the competitive position of the mortgage are beneficial, but in themselves they will not produce a dramatic increase overnight in the availability of funds. Sound national monetary and fiscal policies are essential if the financial resources necessary for new housing are to be forthcoming from the private sector, and if we are to provide essential public services. Success will also demand a deep personal commitment and a dedication to innovation by all Americans whether in the public or private sectors.

We also believe there are additional considerations vital to achieving the goals of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968. We urge Congress and the American people to consider the following recommendations:

- To minimize land speculation and related problems, a concerted effort must be made to develop new means for the acquisition of property so that existing and proposed programs can be implemented. Attention should be paid to ideas such as creating federal, state and local multi-purpose authorities and quasi-public agencies to undertake land and property acquisition and site development for large scale ventures.
- Steps must be taken to assure that the "workable program" requirements, as a condition of urban assistance in federally-aided programs, do not serve as a barrier to low and moderate income housing.
- Further steps are necessary to assure that regulations, especially concerning cost and income limits, are realistic in terms of local area conditions.
- Continuing efforts to eliminate red tape and to streamline operations are of paramount importance to the success of all existing and proposed programs.

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--Continuing, independent evaluation processes should be established to measure the effectiveness of government programs against their goals. We must break the long-established tradition of building one program on top of another and assure that the various programs are combined in the most efficient and effective manner.

A major national effort must include a primary emphasis on people and their needs--with respect for the community and full provision of all necessary commercial and social facilities and services. It must also include high architectural standards and first-class construction for attractive homes and neighborhoods. As part of an overall effort to rebuild our urban areas, new and rehabilitated low-rent housing should be located in both the city and the suburbs and interspersed with other types of rental and private housing for the creation of balanced neighborhoods. We must strive for dynamic communities in which all residents can share a sense of dignity and security.

We recognize that, at best, the dissolution of the racial ghettos in our large cities is a long range task. Pending dissolution, the intolerable conditions that exist in the ghettos must be alleviated and required funds must be provided. We agree, however, with the President's Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders that "This can be no more than an interim strategy." We shall achieve neither equality nor social peace by building physically improved but apartheid compounds. Our primary goal must be a single, integrated society. To this end, we urge that in allo-

cating public funds for housing, education, recreation and other facilities, preference be given to programs that embrace a metropolitan or regional area including a city and its environs and that will demonstrably advance integration.

We have come to a time when we must realize that existing housing markets and housing programs simply do not meet the needs of millions of Americans. A long-run solution requires both technological progress to lower housing development costs and broad social, educational and economic efforts to raise income levels for all Americans. But time is short, and we must begin to solve our housing problems now. Having recognized the urgency of our housing needs, we must strive to develop the most effective mix of public and private resources for carrying out a broad cooperative program. We must apply wide vision and hard realism if our goals are to be realized and if we are not to have new aspirations become further frustrations. Only a massive and carefully coordinated endeavor will achieve the scale required if each American is to have the long-denied opportunity of a decent home and suitable living environment.