

**For Immediate Release**  
July 17, 2009

Contact Tracy Munford  
(212) 614-5538 (office)  
(646) 483-6804 (cell)

**REPORT ESTIMATES CLOSE TO 30,000 NYC PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS ARE UNEMPLOYED AND SEEKING JOBS IN A RECESSION ECONOMY.  
CSS CALLS ON NYCHA TO STRENGTHEN SECTION 3 EFFORTS TO PROVIDE JOB AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES GENERATED BY HUD AND ECONOMIC STIMULUS FUNDS.**

The Community Service Society (CSS) today released a report that examines labor force participation among New York's working-age public housing residents. The report, **"Making the Connection: Economic Opportunity for Public Housing Residents,"** finds that 64 percent of residents are engaged in work or education; 51 percent in the labor force and 13 percent in school, but more than 36 percent who should be working aren't or can't, according to David R. Jones, president and CEO of CSS. The report underlines the importance of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) as a major source of economic activity that can significantly expand opportunities for many of NYCHA'S 30,000 job-seeking or training-ready residents who are unemployed.

NYCHA runs the largest public housing program in the country, comprising of a half-million residents in more than 180,000 apartments in 340 developments across the five boroughs. Under Section 3 of the 1968 Housing Act, housing authorities are required to use HUD funding to maximize economic opportunities for low-income residents. The infusion of an additional \$423 million in federal economic stimulus funds for NYCHA- under the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) presents an added challenge to NYCHA to strengthen its currently small-scale Section 3 efforts and detail a more comprehensive program in coordination with the city's major workforce development agencies.

"NYCHA has a major challenge and an extraordinary opportunity to significantly alter the quality of life for residents of public housing - by providing training and employment to thousands of public housing residents," Jones added. "While NYCHA has been responsive to demands for a more effective Section 3 effort, the results have been insignificant; not only in New York, but also in housing authorities in major cities across the country. NYCHA has the opportunity to become one of the largest employment generators for residents of New York. Given the economic outlook, connecting people to training and employment is a win-win for all concerned."

According to **"Making the Connection,"** in 2005 NYCHA working-age residents had the equivalent of a 17 percent unemployment rate, a high rate, but not unusual for low-income Blacks and Latinos across the city. The report provides an outline and profile of unemployed NYCHA residents seeking work.

In addition, one of the challenges NYCHA faces is the educational deficits of many NYCHA residents seeking work. More than one third (36%) of NYCHA residents have no high school diploma. GED preparation is an essential part of any Section 3 strategy.

NYCHA plans to distribute the \$423 in ARRA funds to developments in all five boroughs. Brooklyn will receive the largest share of \$181 million, while the Bronx will receive \$90 million, Queens will receive \$48 million and Manhattan will receive \$15 million.

Victor Bach, co-author of the report, said, "NYCHA houses a resident population of a size that matches the population of other major cities, like Boston and Cleveland. It should be using its funds and collaborate with city government to make an all-out Section 3 effort to address the high rate of unemployment among low-income residents, particularly in the midst of the current economic recession."

CSS, in the report, lists five recommendations for NYCHA to move quickly to significantly improve its Section 3 effort:

1. The pending House bill to reform and strengthen Section 3 being drafted by Rep. Nydia Gonzalez, be enacted by Congress as rapidly as possible, so that current job and training opportunities are not lost.
2. Fiscal incentives be incorporated into federal operating subsidy allocations and Section 3 reforms that would enable housing authorities to retain increased rental income that results from local Section 3 initiatives.
3. Mayor Bloomberg should act immediately to create an interagency task force to work with NYCHA on the detailed design and targeting of Section 3 programs that provide direct access to opportunities for job-seekers in public housing.
4. NYCHA set out a process in which it can respond to and implement innovative proposals that will allow the authority to expand or deepen its section 3 efforts.
5. Finally, NYCHA take steps to link its job/training creation efforts to resident leaders and job-seekers in the developments where opportunities are becoming available. Resident leaders should play a direct role in designing program mechanisms to deliver job/training opportunities.

# # #

*For 160 years, the Community Service Society of New York has been the leading voice on behalf of low-income New Yorkers and continues to advocate for the economic security of the working poor in the nation's largest city.*