



U.S. Representative • 9TH CD, New York • Brooklyn-Queens

ANTHONY D. WEINER

Report

NO VACANCY: NEW YORK CITY'S SENIOR HOUSING SHORTAGE

Presented by
Congressman Anthony D. Weiner

Social Security. Prescription Drugs. Medicare. All of these issues are at the top of Washington's policy agenda, and rightly so. The number of older Americans is growing faster than any other segment of the population, and it is imperative that our Government make the necessary investments to ensure their security. But there is one more pillar of retirement security that is every big as important, but often ignored: Housing.

No one would question that housing is a critical factor in determining the quality of life of older people. And no one familiar with the facts would question that tremendous needs exist in this area. In America, more than 7 million elderly households pay more than 30% of their incomes on housing and receive no housing assistance.

The good news is the federal government has a successful initiative in place to address these growing housing needs. HUD's section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly is universally praised by seniors' advocates, not-for-profits and community group as a model government program. Section 202 provides capital grants to community groups for the construction of affordable housing for low-income seniors. Since its inception, the program has supported the construction of approximately 5,000 facilities, accounting for more than 300,000 residential units.

The bad news is that, just as demand for seniors housing is poised to explode, federal funding has been gutted. In 1995, when the Republicans gained control of Congress, many federal programs saw dramatic budget cuts, but few were greater than the cuts to the 202 program. In the first two years of Republican control, 202 funding dropped from \$1.28 billion annually to \$645 million -- a 50% cut. As record surpluses materialized, 202 funding increased slightly, but funding is still more than 33% lower than in 1995.

We wanted to examine the impact of these budget cuts and an aging population on New York City, so we conducted a phone survey of every 202 facility in the metropolitan area. The results provide clear evidence that our federal investments in seniors' housing are inadequate and older New Yorkers are paying the price. Our key findings were as follows:

- Over 200,000 NYC Seniors are waiting for 17,000 Section 202 units.
- Some New York facilities report wait list of up to 10 years
- The number of new 202 units constructed in NYC has been cut in half since 1993.

These findings show that Congress should restore 202 funding to 1995 levels at a minimum. And as the baby boomers approach retirement age, we should explore other strategies to expand housing opportunities such as increased funding for the preservation of existing 202 housing and funding for services at 202s and naturally occurring retirement communities. President Franklin Roosevelt said, "There is no tragedy in growing old, but there is tragedy in growing old without means of support." Let us hope that Washington will act on these facts and avoid a tragedy making much needed investments in seniors housing.

Methodology

During the Spring of 2002, we conducted a phone survey of every Section 202 housing facility in New York City. This list was provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The survey consisted of two questions: 1) How many people are on the waiting list for housing within your 202? 2) What is the average time a person spends on the waiting list before they are placed in a unit?

We received responses from 86 of the City's 183 facilities. To project the total number of seniors on waiting lists for the entire city, we calculated the number of applicants on a waiting list per unit of 202 housing and assumed that these #s would be consistent through each of the five boroughs. We then took that ratio of seniors per unit and multiplied it by the number of 202 units in each borough.

For example, 33 Section 202 facilities in the Bronx containing 3,060 units of housing reported a total of 21,638 names on their waiting lists -- a ratio of 7.07 applicants waiting per unit. We then multiplied that ratio (7.07) by the total number of Section 202 units in the Bronx (4,155) to estimate that there are 29,376 applicants on waiting lists for Section 202 housing in the Bronx.

Once we had estimated totals for all five boroughs, we added those totals.

It is important to note that some seniors may be on more than one waiting list. However, without actually taking the list of names on each list and comparing them, there is no way to calculate the number of duplicates. The American Association of Retired Persons conducts a bi-annual national survey of Section 202 waiting lists, but recognizing the difficulty in quantifying the number of duplicates and their negligible impact on the waiting list totals, their methodology does not discount for duplications. Likewise, our study does not discount for the number of duplicates.

Table I: Federal Section 202 Funding Levels -- FY 1993 -- FY 2002

Fiscal Year	Funding Appropriated
93	\$1,116,099,000

94	\$1,158,000,000	
95	\$1,279,000,000	
[Republicans take control of House and Senate]		
96	\$830,190,000	
97	\$645,000,000	
98	\$645,000,000	
99	\$660,000,000	
00	\$710,000,000	
01	\$777,286,000	
02	\$783,286,000	

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Table II: Section 202 Funding to New York City -- FY 1993 -- FY 2001

Fiscal Year	Funding Awarded	Units Constructed
93	\$71,273,500	883
94	\$61,696,500	765
95	\$60,233,200	743
96	\$55,129,500	678
97	\$38,264,600	475
98	\$41,541,400	495
99	\$50,692,100	518
00	\$52,353,800	539
01	\$48,209,900	409

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Table III: Borough-by-Borough Waiting List Totals and Wait Times

BRONX				
# of 202 Facilities	# of 202 Units	Applicants on Waiting Lists	# of Waiting Applicants per unit	Average senior wait time
33 respondents	3,060	21,638	7.07	1.60 years
50 total facilities	4,155	29,376		
BROOKLYN				
# of 202 Facilities	# of 202 Units	Applicants on Waiting Lists	# of Waiting Seniors per unit	Average senior wait time
28 respondents	2,598	48,396	18.63	3.60 years
57 total facilities	6,405	119,313		
MANHATTAN				
# of 202 Facilities	# of 202 Units	Applicants on Waiting Lists	# of Waiting Seniors per unit	Average senior wait time
11 respondents	934	6,757	7.23	5.40 years
54 total facilities	4,080	29,498		
QUEENS				
# of 202 Facilities	# of 202 Units	Applicants on Waiting Lists	# of Waiting Seniors per unit	Average senior wait time
10 respondents	1,174	13,400	11.41	5.62 years
18 total facilities	2,429	27,715		

STATEN ISLAND

# of 202 Facilities	# of 202 Units	Applicants on Waiting Lists	# of Waiting Seniors per unit	Average senior wait time
4 respondents	327	8,800	36.70	4 years
4 total facilities	327	8,800		

Congressman Anthony D. Weiner

Reports List