



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 29, 2007

CONTACTS:

Abby Ottenhoff	312/814.3158
Rebecca Rausch	217/782.7355
Gerardo Cardenas	312/814.3158
Man Yee Lee (IHDA)	312/836.5234

Gov. Blagojevich announces \$4.8 million for Illinois' first intergenerational development to help former foster children and other children raised by relatives

Washington Park development pilot program to provide supportive housing and services to underserved communities

CHICAGO— Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced construction is underway to build Illinois' first intergenerational development to benefit former foster children, and other children who are being raised by relatives. The Coppin House development, located in Chicago's Washington Park neighborhood is part of a pilot program launched last December, and supported with \$4.8 million in state funds. The development is designed for both groups to live in the same housing complex, share on-site supportive services and become each other's support network.

"We need to help make sure that young adults leaving foster care get the support of relatives in a safe environment where they can become independent and responsible, and have a shot at a better future. This development will also help ensure that they have access to good health care and education," said Gov. Blagojevich.

The youth aging out of foster care will benefit from the safety net provided by the supportive services. The adults who are already acting as caregivers to their related children will become role models and provide emotional support to the former foster youth, while also receiving the benefits of the supportive services themselves. Often, the caregivers in such families are the grandparents, aunts or uncles of the children in need of care. If successful, the program could be expanded to other parts of the state.

The State contributed more than \$4.8 million in grants, loans and tax credits for the construction of the development. This includes \$4.25 million in interest-free loans and \$432,500 in state affordable housing tax credits allocated by the state's affordable housing agency, the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA). The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) also invested over \$164,000 to install energy efficient windows, insulation, lighting, and appliances. Additionally, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) will provide ongoing resources for the supportive services and rent subsidies.

“Since taking office, Governor Blagojevich has ensured that Illinois remains a leader in providing continued support for foster children even after they leave the state's foster care system. Developments such as Coppin House will serve as a model for how to combine state resources to benefit children in Illinois. It exemplifies the type of innovation that is needed to create an efficient supportive housing development that serves the unique needs of two underserved communities,” said DeShana L. Forney, IHDA Executive Director. Director Forney spoke at a groundbreaking ceremony for Coppin House today organized by the project's non-profit developers, Interfaith Housing Development Corporation of Chicago and Coppin A.M.E. Church.

Coppin House will be a 54-unit development, consisting of one, two, three and four-bedroom apartments. Twenty-eight of the apartments will be for young adults aging out of the foster care system with the remaining 26 units targeted at the kinship families.

Interfaith Housing Development Corporation of Chicago is the developer with Coppin A.M.E. Church as the neighborhood partner. Coppin A.M.E. Church will offer on-site services with DCFS and other social service providers that include case management, life skills training, mentoring, job coaching and personal budgeting.

“Coppin House will play a key role in the revitalization and strengthening of the Washington Park community while also providing decent, affordable housing for two underserved populations. We appreciate the State's recognition of the importance of meeting the housing needs of youth aging out of foster care and kinship families. Without this development, the youth and families who will be helped would have been in serious risk of becoming homeless,” said Gladys Jordan, president of Interfaith Housing Development Corp.

“Coppin House will be a valuable asset, not only in making a difference in the lives of young people who have had to struggle, but it will also create an opportunity for the neighborhood to contribute. The Coppin congregation has a large population of retired professionals who are looking for wholesome activities to engage in and this would be ideal for them. To offer them a rewarding activity to be a part of is rewarding to Coppin A.M.E Church and to our partners, Interfaith Housing Development Corporation of Chicago. We thank Governor Blagojevich for helping us achieve all this,” said Rev. Walter R. Bauldrick from Coppin A.M.E. Church.

Monthly rents will range from \$700 to \$1,000, depending on unit size. DCFS will subsidize the rent for transitioning youth who are not yet employed. Working young adults will be asked to pay a maximum of 30 percent of their income towards rent, with the remaining balance subsidized by DCFS. Similarly, working kinship families will be required to contribute a

maximum of 30 percent of their household income towards rent, while federal Section 8 rent vouchers will cover the outstanding amount.

DCFS and other social service providers will refer youth aged 18-21 years and kinship families to Coppin House for consideration as potential residents. The development is expected to be completed by Spring 2008.

“Under Gov. Blagojevich’s leadership, Illinois has built the most comprehensive set of support in the nation for foster youth transitioning to independence,” said DCFS Acting Director Erwin McEwen. “We know that children and youth do best when supported by family and community. This community-based project will help those youth and their relatives share services and support each other’s success.”

“Coppin House is a tremendous development project that will help create strong individuals and families and an even stronger community. Gov. Blagojevich and I are excited to be a part of this project, which we are also helping to be as energy efficient as possible,” said DCEO Director Jack Lavin.

Since 2003, Governor Blagojevich has taken several measures to help former foster care youth and other children who are under the care of their relatives. He nearly doubled funding for the Department on Aging’s Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Program in 2005, approving an additional \$200,000 over the fiscal year 2006 allocation. The program provides assistance with paying for emergency needs, utility bills, medications, food and clothing. Illinois has also become a national leader in taking advantage of federal and state funds to provide continued care for young adults aging out of foster care up until the age of 21. Sharing the DCFS-funded services for young adults aging out of foster care means both populations stand to benefit from the same amount of investment.

Coppin House is among the first of a wave of innovative housing efforts expected to grow from Governor Blagojevich’s annual comprehensive housing plans, introduced in 2005 to provide a road map for how to leverage and expend housing dollars. In the housing plans, the Governor calls for state agencies to work with the private sector to leverage all available resources in the creation of affordable housing that targets the needs of specific priority populations including low-income individuals and families in danger of becoming homeless. The 2007 Housing Plan: *Affordable Housing Dimensions* identified \$763 million in spending earmarked for affordable housing at nine different state agencies that will help approximately 146,000 Illinois residents. This year’s housing plan also highlights how the Governor’s vision as outlined in the first two plans is already reshaping affordable housing in Illinois.

The new approach to affordable housing highlighted in the housing plans is based on the understanding that affordable housing with the right targeted support is critical to reducing the number of Illinois residents residing in costly institutions – ranging from nursing homes to foster care to prisons. Quality, stable affordable housing also reduces unemployment and promotes access to education.