

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

MY NAME IS SHAUN BRADY AND I AM HERE REPRESENTING KENSINGTON *ACTION NOW*. WE THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING TESTIMONY HERE TODAY IN PHILADELPHIA. I ALSO AM A FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF, LIVING FREE CENTERS, THE ONLY OUTPATIENT DRUG AND ALCOHOL TREATMENT CENTER, WHICH SPECIFICALLY TARGETS ITS SERVICES TO THE LOW INCOME POPULATION OF KENSINGTON. I HAVE SEEN FIRST HAND THE HORRIBLE EFFECTS THAT DRUG USE HAS ON OUR COMMUNITY.

KENSINGTON ACTION NOW IS A COALITION OF BLOCK AND NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS, BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS AND CHURCH GROUPS WHICH TOGETHER WORK TO EMPOWER COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE. OUR AREA INCLUDES A SECTION OF KENSINGTON, A NEIGHBORHOOD IN EASTERN NORTH PHILADELPHIA. KENSINGTON WAS FORMERLY KNOWN AS " THE INDUSTRIAL HEART OF PHILADELPHIA" AND " THE WORKPLACE OF THE WORLD." IT IS A STRONG RESIDENTIAL AREA WITH A HIGH RATE OF HOME OWNERSHIP., KENSINGTON ONCE FLORISHED WITH FACTORIES INVOLVED IN TEXTILE, CHEMICAL OR STEEL MANUFACTURING. THE NEIGHBORHOOD BEGAN ITS LONG AND SHARP DECLINE IN THE LATE SIXTIES. PLANTS SHUT DOWN OR RELOCATED, THOUSANDS OF GOOD PAYING JOBS VANISHED, FORCING TWENTY FIVE PERCENT OF THE POPULATION TO MOVE ELSEWHERE IN SEARCH OF A LIVELIHOOD. CAPITAL FLIGHT BROUGHT ON SEVERE URBAN BLIGHT, ACCOMPANIED BY HIGH UNEMPLOMENT, CRIME RATES, PHYSICAL DETERIORATION OF HOUSING STOCK AND INFRACTURE ALONG WITH A SHARP REDUCTION IN CITY SERVICES.

KENSINGTON ACTION NOW WAS FORMED IN 1975 BY A VARIETY OF COMMUNITY GROUPS TO CONFRONT THE SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. IN 1980, WE CREATED A DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, KENSINGTON AREA REVITALIZATION PROJECT, TO ENCOURAGE HOUSING IMPROVEMENTS AND OTHER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

DRUG ABUSE PRESENTS ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS CONFRONTING OUR COMMUNITY. DRUG ABUSE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO SOME OF KENSINGTON'S OTHER PROBLEMS, SUCH AS CRIME AND JOBLESSNESS. TO DATE, GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS HAVE FAILED TO SOLVE THE DRUG PROBLEM AND WE BELIEVE THAT NOW IS THE TIME FOR THE COMMUNITY WHICH LIVES WITH THE DRUG PROBLEM TWENTY FOURS HOURS A DAY, TO RECEIVE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO WIN OVER THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF OUR YOUTH, NEIGHBORS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.

OUR COMMUNITY IS PLAGUED BY RIVALING GANGS, WHOSE EXISTENCE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO DRUG PROFITEERING AND DRUG USE. CRACK HOUSES ARE ABUNDANT AND VACANT HOUSES ARE USED AS DRUG DENS. RESIDENTS ARE CONSTANTLY BURGULARIZED AND BEATEN BY DRUG USERS FOR MONEY AND PERSONAL GOODS WHICH ARE SOLD TO SUPPORT THEIR DRUG HABITS. THE COMMUNITY PEOPLE WHO STAND UP TO THE DRUG DEALERS ARE HARRASSED AND THREATENED. ONE OF OUR CHURCHES WHERE PEOPLE GATHERED TO DISCUSS AND ADDRESS THE DRUG PROBLEM WAS THREATENED WITH FIRE BOMBING BY THE DRUG GANGS, IF THEY CONTINUED TO ALLOW ACTIVITIES WHICH INTERFERE WITH THEIR PROFITS OR CAUSE THEM PROBLEMS.

THE PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT ATTORNEY IDENTIFIED THE NORTH WESTERN PORTION OF OUR SERVICE AREA AS THE MOST SERIOUS DRUG INFESTED AREA IN PHILADELPHIA. ONE OF OUR COMMUNITY LEADERS, WHO LIVES IN THIS AREA REMARKED THAT " WHEN YOU WALK OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSE AND SEE SEVEN YEAR OLD CHILDREN SELLING DRUGS FROM A CAR, YOU KNOW THAT THE PROBLEM IS SERIOUS."

DRUGS PROLIFERATE AT OUR SCHOOLS. AT THE HUNTER SCHOOL LOCATED AT MASHER AND DAULPHIN STREETS, DRUG DEALERS OPENLY PLY THEIR TRADE AND LAUGH AT THE DRUG FREE SCHOOL ZONE SIGNS. RESIDENTS KEEP THEIR CHILDREN INSIDE AFTER SCHOOL AND ARE WORRIED HOW THEY WILL KEEP THEM SAFE WHEN THE SUMMER COMES AND THE TEMPERATURE INSIDE THEIR HOMES IS OVER 100 DEGREES.

OUR COMMUNITY BELIEVES THAT THE DRUG PROBLEM IS AT A CRITICAL AND SEVERE STAGE, AND UNLESS WE WORK TO ADDRESS IT NOW, ALL THE OTHER COMMUNITY PROJECTS WE ARE WORKING ON WILL HAVE LITTLE OR NO EFFECT ON IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN KENSINGTON.

WE BELIEVE THAT SINCE DRUG DEALERS MAKE THEIR MONEY FROM THE PEOPLE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY, THAT MONEY CONSCIFICATED FROM DRUG DEALERS MUST BE PUT BACK AND CONTROLLED BY THE COMMUNITIES WHO ARE SUFFERING THE HORRIBLE EFFECTS OF THE ILLEGAL DRUG TRADE.

KENSINGTON ACTION NOW HAS A LONG BACKGROUND WORKING WITH GROUPS AROUND DRUG AND SAFETY ISSUES. RESIDENTS IDENTIFIED AND PRIORITIZED PROBLEM CORNERS FOR EFFECTIVE POLICE RESPONSE. AN UNANIMOUS

CALLING SYSTEM WAS ARRANGED BETWEEN RESIDENTS AND THE CAPTAINS OF THE POLICE DISTRICTS FOR DRUG TIPS. A YEAR AGO LEADERSHIP IDENTIFIED DRUGS AS THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM CONFRONTING OUR COMMUNITY. SINCE THAT TIME COMMUNITY LEADERS STUDIED AND DEVELOPED STRATEGIES TO PREVENT THE FURTHER SPREAD OF DRUG USE WITHIN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS. WE HAVE BEGUN TO IMPLIMENT PREVENTION PROGRAMS DIRECTED TO OUR YOUTH AS WELL AS PARENTS AND CONCERNED NEIGHBORS. OUR PLANS HAVE BEEN DEALT A SET BACK BECAUSE THE CITY GOVERNMENT DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES FOR ALL AREAS OF PHILADELPHIA AFFECTED BY DRUGS.

OUR COMMUNITY GROUPS WOULD USE RESOURCES OBTAINED THROUGH FORFITURE TO EFFECTIVELY IMPLIMENT DRUG PREVENTION PROGRAMS WHICH ENABLE OUR YOUTH TO RESIST THE PRESSURES TO BECOME INVOLVED WITH DRUGS, INCREASE ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITES FOR YOUTH AND EDUCATE PARENTS ABOUT THE MYRIAD PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH DRUG ABUSE. WE WOULD ENHANCE COMMUNITY AWARENESS ABOUT HOW AND WHERE THEY CAN TURN FOR HELP WHEN CONFRONTED WITH DRUG USE WITHIN THEIR FAMILIES. THE INADEQUATE ADDICTION TREATMENT SERVICES WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY WOULD BE ABLE TO EXPAND TO NECESSARY LEVELS SO THAT THOSE SEEKING HELP COULD BE CARED FOR.

OUR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE HOUSING CONDITIONS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS COULD BE GIVEN A STROGER IMPETUS. ALL OF THESE EFFORTS WHEN GIVEN THE PROPER AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT WOULD MAKE A DRAMATIC AND POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL PEOPLE WHO NOW LIVE WITH THE SERIOUS DRUG ABUSE PROBLEM OUTSIDE THEIR FRONT DOORS.

ALL OF US AT KENSINGTON ACTION NOW URGE YOU TO SUPORT THE ADMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL 845 PROPOSED BY THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS FORFITURE AMENDMENTS COALITION AD HOC COMMITTEE-- THAT

SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE CASH AND PROPERTY PROCEEDS SHOULD BE SET ASIDE FOR NON-PROFIT COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVELY FIGHTING DRUG ABUSE AND RELATED EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES.

ALL CONFISCATED HOUSES MUST BE OFFERED TO NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

BEFORE BEING AUCTIONED IN THE OPEN MARKET

ALL CITIES, BOROUGHS, TOWNSHIPS AND VILLAGES WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE SET ASIDE FUNDS.

ALL PROCEED WOULD BY DISTRIBUTED BY THE COUNTY CONTROLLER AND A CITIZENS REVIEW PANEL.

THERE WOULD BE AN ~~PUBLIC~~ AUDIT OF FORFEITURE FUNDS AND PROPERTY PROCEEDS ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.

I, ON BEHALF OF KENSINGTON ACTION NOW, THANK THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOR THEIR ATTENTION TO OUR NEEDS AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT TESTIMONY IN PHILADELPHIA.