

Remarks for Mayor Thomas M. Menino
Conference on TANF Reauthorization and Housing Policy
Brookings Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
April 12, 2002

Good afternoon. I want to thank the Brookings Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities for inviting me here today. And for all the good work you do to raise the issues of working families and families in search of work.

Bruce Katz has been a long-standing friend of our nation's mayors-- from his work on the Senate Banking Committee and at HUD, to his current leadership role with Brookings. And the work of Bob Greenstein and his staff at the Center provides a constant reality check to the spin masters of OMB, CBO and the rest of the alphabet soup down here.

I should add that while Bob "stole" Barbara Sard from Massachusetts, I helped steal one of his former staffers, Cliff Johnson.

He is doing great work as head of the Institute for Youth, Education and Families, which I helped launch through the National League of Cities. The Institute has been a great success in focusing city officials on the issues of working families. And it is a model for what I want to start doing in a couple of weeks when I become President of the United States Conference of Mayors.

I want to pledge three things to you today:

1. We will consider these recommendations in the form of a resolution to be considered by the mayors at our Annual Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin this June. We will also work with you to oppose the counter-productive work requirements proposed by the Administration.
2. Through the Conference's partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we will consider best practices and new models for local housing and TANF initiatives coordinated with their Family Economic Success Framework.
3. And we will work with you to bring federal welfare and housing officials and city officials together to forge new policy nationally

and create innovative programs locally. Our aim is to create a permanent voice for local officials on TANF implementation in Washington and in every state.

Let me spend a moment to preview what I want to do with the Mayors' Conference, then I'll address the study.

At the risk of preaching to the choir, I want to focus my year as President on the issues of "working families". I'm going to kick off our efforts in May, with a national housing summit aimed at raising the public visibility of that issue and enlisting what I call "new partners" in that effort - - business, labor, churches, senior citizens groups and others.

Gene Lowe is here from the Conference and we'd like to get your thoughts on some of the potential partners we can enlist -- people who can bring fresh thinking to an ongoing problem.

We are also partnering with the Annie E. Casey Foundation on efforts to help mayors help families. For example, cities like Boston and Chicago

are waging strong campaigns to inform eligible families about the availability of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Brookings' study of the EITC and Boston spurred us to greater efforts. We saw that in 1997, residents of Boston earned over \$53 million, but that millions more can be claimed. We are doing that now.

All of you know that the Credit is a great tool for lifting families up from poverty. We want to work with the Casey Foundation and others to get more cities to run comprehensive campaigns and we want to work with families taking the credit to help them make them aware of all their choices.

For example, I'd like to see us connect EITC beneficiaries with programs such as Individual Development Account initiatives and Section 8 homeownership programs. We know now, from our work in Boston's neighborhoods, which areas have a strong concentration of EITC participants. Now, we can target specific programs and outreach where we know the additional dollars are going.

So I see my activities during my term as President of the US Conference of Mayors as advancing an "opportunity agenda" for working families in the areas of housing, education, job training and health care.

I plan to advance that agenda by lobbying Congress and the Administration, by building "new partnerships" for our cities, and by sharing "best practices" which each mayor can adopt and build upon for their own cities. I also want to strengthen the role of our policy committees, and that's where the work you have done comes in.

I'm very proud of the work that Mayor Willie Brown of San Francisco has done as Chair of our Housing and Community Development Committee.

His committee has drafted several wide-ranging housing proposals, which focus on the need to produce more rental housing; expand homeownership; reinvest in public housing and address the special needs of the elderly, the homeless and the HIV-positive. Last week, they met in San Francisco to begin drafting resolutions for our June meeting.

Mayors are also taking an active role in welfare reauthorization. Yesterday, the Conference submitted testimony about the need to expand childcare, support intensive job training and oppose the increased work requirements proposed by the Bush Administration. And he is absolutely right on all these issues.

I will be forwarding your recommendations to Mayor Brown and I will ask my staff to work with them and with you to integrate your work with our agenda. I would be proud to sponsor a resolution on housing and TANF that builds on your recommendations.

The work you have done in this study is extremely important. In my own state of Massachusetts, I have seen housing costs skyrocket and housing assistance plummet.

As Barbara knows, we once had our own state rental housing assistance program, Chapter 707, which supplemented the federal Section 8 program. It was a shallower subsidy than Section 8, which meant that it only worked in a few communities. The program was eventually closed to

new participants with the result that total housing support in Massachusetts has declined significantly.

The one new housing initiative we've seen in Massachusetts appropriated \$20 million a year for a Housing Trust Fund. By comparison, I committed \$30 million for new housing, that same year, from city funds. And more recently, Mayor Hahn in Los Angeles, a much bigger city, created a \$100 million Housing Trust Fund. But much more is needed.

Creating more linkages and reinforcing strategies involving housing, welfare assistance and job training is essential. Part of the failure probably comes from the fact that state welfare departments and city housing agencies rarely connect. But my sense is that at the neighborhood level, there are non-profit agencies that help provide these linkages -- the government policies and program should work more flexibly to support and strengthen them.

For example, one of our highly successful job training initiatives combines several of our community development corporations with hospitals in our Longwood area.

Even in the midst of our current recession, our hospitals need trained staff. This program trains local residents for the jobs that are a short walk or bus ride away. It saves commuting costs of time and money and puts more money back into the nearby neighborhood economy. In some cases, it will provide employment for those residing in the housing run by these CDCs. It's a great model for you to examine.

We also find some of our most effective "opportunity" programs in the most unlikely places. I started a program called, "Technology Goes Home", to provide low income families with their own home computer.

A parent and a child go together to be trained over a few weeks and when they "graduate" together, they receive the computer. A number of parents have told me that as a result of their training, they have been able to either get a job or get a better job.

I am very proud of the job training network we have in Boston. In fact, our people are now working with Mayor Bloomberg's people in New

York to help them revitalize their efforts, particularly in terms of linkages with the private sector.

The bottom line for us regarding welfare reform is -- the more training we can give an individual, the more income they will earn and the more stable their housing situation will become. I have filed state legislation to allow more time for people on welfare to receive training and education, because we have seen the positive results.

I think that the successful mayors of the 21st century will be those mayors who can help families become economically self-sufficient, and keep them in our city.

To do so, mayors will have to be social entrepreneurs, helping to stretch and leverage limited resources -- be they TANF or Earned Income Tax Credit checks, HOPE VI funds or E-rate monies -- all of these help to reduce poverty and secure opportunity.

That's why I'm in this business and I know that's why you are too.

Again, thank you for inviting me here and thank you for your strong recommendations.