October 23, 2007

Dear,

The mission of the South Middlesex Opportunity Council is “Organizing Resources for Social Change and Economic Independence.” As part of that mission, SMOC has served low-income and disadvantaged individuals and families in our communities for more than forty years.

The important work that we do assists children and seniors, victims of domestic violence, people with disabilities, people who are educationally disadvantaged, new immigrants, people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, ex-offenders who are turning their lives around and people recovering from substance abuse or a mental illness. Many of them are trying to secure a better future for themselves and their families. SMOC provides valuable programs and services that help them on the road to self-sufficiency.

One of our newer programs, in operation since July of 2003, involves a collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC). In an effort to prevent homelessness, reduce recidivism and promote public safety, the DOC has contracted with SMOC to operate the Reentry Housing Program. This program, based on a SMOC model which was nationally recognized by HUD in its 2000 Best Practice Awards, assists inmates who are releasing from DOC custody who are at risk of homelessness.

During FY 2007, our dedicated team of Housing Specialists provided pre-release housing search services to 205 inmates releasing from 15 correctional facilities to over 40 cities and towns across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We have worked hard to meet the challenges of securing safe affordable housing for former inmates, to ensure that inmates are extended every possible opportunity to succeed in the community, with the ultimate goal being to reduce recidivism and promote public safety.
Working with ex-offenders presents a unique set of challenges. The public has a vested interest in the work that is being done and the media often focuses attention on these types of programs. SMOC is committed to providing high quality services and we want to be transparent in the work that we do. In order to put things in their proper context, it is important to keep in mind that offenders are releasing from prison every day. The type of assistance that the RHP provides can mean the difference between someone having a stable place to live or ending up homeless and living on the streets, more likely to re-offend. The Reentry Housing Program is a proactive measure to promote public safety. SMOC is proud to be partnering with the DOC in this collaborative effort to prevent homelessness, reduce recidivism and promote public safety.

In keeping with the spirit of transparency, the enclosed Annual Report highlights some of the accomplishments of the Reentry Housing Program during FY 2007. I hope that you will find it informative and that it will help you to gain a better perspective on the work that SMOC is doing with ex-offenders.

Sincerely,

James T. Cuddy
Executive Director