

US Representative David Price  
HomeStart Celebration October 20, 2003

- It is an honor to join you here today for this HomeStart celebration. This event is more than an “open house.” It is the realization of the hard work of a dedicated staff-people who have overcome daunting obstacles to make this dream a reality.
- I am fortunate to represent a congressional district that has so many high quality nonprofit social service organizations, and the Inter-Faith Council is one of those shining stars.
- I want to applaud Chris Moran, the board, and volunteers of the IFC for being such an important part of the community here in Orange County, nurturing a segment of the population that too often is ignored or allowed to slip through the cracks. Congratulations on forty years of exemplary service!
- Our current economic downturn has been especially devastating to families- not just here in North Carolina, but across the country. 1.7 million more Americans slipped below the poverty line last year. For many, affordable housing has never been so out of reach.
- Ending homelessness isn't just about providing affordable housing for them. It's also about providing the affordable healthcare, education and training to those who need it. IFC puts people in touch with these support services and helps them transition back to permanent housing. It's our job to see that they- and other community based and faith based programs – have the necessary resources to make that happen.
- But HomeStart was forced to make a difficult transition this year when the federal funding it had been receiving from the Department of Housing and Urban Development was unexpectedly not renewed.
- That we are here today to celebrate HomeStart is a testament to both the resilience of the Inter-Faith Council and this community, as well as to some of the problems that continue to plague the federal approach to housing and homelessness.
- Chris Moran and the Inter-Faith Council, along with its many community partners, quickly adapted to the new circumstances in a way that allows HomeStart to continue its mission providing housing and supportive services to homeless women and children.
- Many of us would have been tempted to give up and allow HomeStart to wither away. But the Inter-Faith Council did not give up. It reached out to the community for help, and the community responded. For that I applaud you all.
- The truth is, however that they never should have been put in this situation to begin with. HUD's homeless assistance program is not working as it should when successful transitional housing programs like HomeStart are denied renewal funding. It simply makes no sense.
- The Bush Administration has taken some positive steps on combating homelessness by reestablishing the Interagency Council on Homelessness and through a new effort to combat chronic homelessness.
- But as you know only too well...that is not enough.
- We can't let this focus on chronic homelessness take away from the need to devote more resources to other homeless populations—particularly families with children—that continue to be underserved. The effort to end chronic homelessness is laudable, but resources for that effort must be in addition to new resources for helping all homeless subgroups...not instead of them.
- We all believe that permanent housing is where we want people to end up. But we should also be helping communities act on their own priorities for attacking the broad challenges presented by homelessness. And we should make sure that there are enough federal resources to help them address those priorities.
- I am proud of the Inter-Faith Council for not giving up on HomeStart, and for renewing its dedication to serving the homeless in our community through this open house. Your spirit of perseverance, dedication and commitment is an inspiration to us all.