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Good morning and welcome to Miami-Dade County and to County Commission District 3. I was honored to accept this invitation to be a part of this distinguished panel along with Congresswoman Frederica Wilson and Mayor Carlos Gimenez, who have provided such tremendous support on the Liberty City Rising project. As the District Commissioner for this area, I'm honored that you have chosen this community to convene this hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business &

Entrepreneurship as we discuss Liberty City Rising specifically, and achieving economic growth around our housing communities in general.

After being elected by my colleagues to serve as Chairwoman of the Board of County Commissioners, I announced that enhancing Affordable, Workforce and Public Housing would be one of my top priorities.

The Board of County Commissioners recently received a report that indicated that since 1989, the County has funded 238 affordable housing projects, including public housing. In spite of these efforts,

because of our rapidly growing population and the rising cost of housing, we still have thousands of people who cannot afford to live in greater Miami and struggle with the cost of housing. I am committed to ensuring that the County continues to redevelop our aging public housing and to build suitable, affordable housing for our working class and our most vulnerable residents and our elderly. I know that we must explore collaborative ways of working with private entities and developing community partnerships as well as fostering small business creation and entrepreneurships to achieve Upward Mobility for distressed communities. So I thank this

committee for coming to Miami-Dade County to put a spotlight on this issue.

We welcome the federal government's participation and support in our efforts to rebuild our communities from the ground up. This County has certainly done its part to prove our commitment to this cause by putting a great deal of our own skin in the game. The Liberty City Rising project is one of the fine showcases of these efforts, and I have devoted countless hours working to ensure this multimillion-dollar plan to revitalize Liberty Square and other public housing projects are a success.

The Liberty Square redevelopment, which was first announced in February 2015, seeks to address the issues of crime and poverty in the area by raising the standard of living for residents and creating opportunities to earn a decent living.

The project, which broke ground in May 2017 and is expected to be completed by the end of next year, involves demolishing and rebuilding Liberty Square's 709 public housing units in phases without displacing any residents. The end product will be a bustling, mixed-income community with shops, parks, community facilities and 1,400 condos, townhouses

and apartments. It will transform residents' lives and the community by bringing healthcare, early childhood education, education for youths and adults, job training, youth programs, elderly programs and yes, small business development to the area.

I am grateful to Senator Rubio for addressing the need for safety and security in our public housing across this nation, and to know that we are not alone in this fight to redevelop our public housing and ensure the safety of our residents.

Miami-Dade County has committed \$74 million for the Liberty City Rising revitalization initiative, which

will be used to leverage over \$390 million of economic activity and private sector investment.

Miami-Dade County has already allocated \$46 million in funding for the redevelopment of Liberty Square and Lincoln Gardens, which will generate over \$307 million in economic activity and private sector investment.

We have allocated an additional \$28 million to revitalize the Liberty City neighborhood. These funds will be utilized to create additional safety measures and economic activity through the construction of new multifamily housing, affordable and workforce

housing, affordable homeownership opportunities, economic development and capital improvements.

The Liberty City Rising revitalization initiative will create an estimated 2,300 jobs. In addition, to address the high unemployment rate in this neighborhood and ensure that many of these jobs are filled by local residents, the County established the Employ Miami-Dade program to train and assist in the hiring of residents from the Liberty City Rising zip codes.

So often when a community has been plagued by the violence that tends to go hand in hand with poverty, it cannot attract small businesses and thrive

economically unless these initiatives are combined with our efforts to address the epidemic of gun violence. That's why I have also made fighting the scourge of gun violence one of the top priorities of my two-year chairmanship. I am strategizing with local law enforcement, our school system, multiple agencies and community-based organizations to address this epidemic.

I have introduced new legislation before the Commission to enhance these efforts with a “boots on the ground” approach – working with local organizations, clergy, law enforcement and our

County's Juvenile Services Department to bring peace and safety to our neighborhoods.

Working with my colleagues on the Board of County Commissioners, our federal, state and local partners and especially our community partners on the front lines, I am confident all these efforts will bear fruit, and that Liberty City Rising will not only transform the community but will serve as a model of urban revitalization in other parts of our County and for the entire nation.

Thank you, and I look forward to continue working with you on these very important efforts. We

welcome and appreciate your vital support and participation.