

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 16, 2018

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mario Díaz-Balart
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development, and Related
Agencies
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development and Related Agencies
2108 Rayburn Building, Washington, DC
20515

Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Díaz-Balart, and Ranking Member Price:

Federal housing assistance is essential for providing safe, decent, and affordable housing for our nation's most vulnerable populations, including families with children, seniors, and persons with disabilities. With 7.4 million extremely low-income Americans currently without access to affordable housing, it should be a top priority to provide robust funding for our nation's rental assistance programs in the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY19) appropriations bill. As you consider the FY19 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) appropriations bill, we urge you to stand behind this country's most vulnerable in advocating for the funding that is necessary for public housing, the Section 8 Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) and Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) programs, and the Section 202 and Section 811 programs.

Since the 1930s, public housing has served an indispensable role on the continuum of affordable housing, providing housing for 1.1 million families (over 2 million people), including seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities, and families with children. It serves a population of "hard to house" people who face challenges that often make it impossible for them to rent a unit in the private market. It is well documented that investing in public housing not only provides necessary improvements for public housing residents, but also results in substantial economic benefits to the surrounding community. For example, an infusion of \$4 billion targeted for the rehabilitation of public housing under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) not only helped remediate increasingly deteriorating housing conditions for public housing residents, but also generated thousands of jobs and created an additional \$2.12 of economic

activity for every \$1.00 spent by the federal government.¹ Further, there were 26 jobs created for every \$1 million invested in public housing.² These statistics show that investing in public housing is a smart investment and should be considered an important part of our nation’s infrastructure.

Similar to the public housing program, the Section 8 TBRA and PBRA programs provide much needed housing assistance to a total of 3.6 million low-income households, over half of whom are elderly or persons with disabilities. These important programs sharply reduce homelessness and other hardships, lift people out of poverty, and are closely linked to educational, developmental, and health benefits that can improve children’s long-term outcomes and reduce costs in other public programs.

For these reasons, we request that you:

- **Fully fund the Public Housing Operating Fund at 100 percent of estimated need**, in order to address the estimated annual operating costs;
- **Appropriate at least \$5 billion for the Public Housing Capital Fund**, which would cover the estimated annual maintenance needs of the public housing stock plus additional funding to address a portion of the backlog of capital repairs;
- **Fully fund the TBRA program** to fund all authorized vouchers as well as robustly fund Administrative Fees; and
- **Fully fund PBRA** to cover all existing contracts.

Finally, the Section 202 and 811 programs are the only programs that exclusively provide housing assistance for seniors and persons with disabilities. The nation’s existing housing stock is unprepared to meet the escalating need for affordability, accessibility, social connectivity, and supportive services that these populations require. Today, a third of adults aged 50 and over—including 37 percent of those aged 80 and over—pay more than 30 percent of income for housing that may or may not fit their needs. Older adults with such severe housing cost burdens spend significantly less on healthcare and food than their peers without housing cost burdens. Further, there have been no new Section 202 or 811 units developed in several years, despite the overwhelming needs for deeply affordable housing for these populations.

Therefore, we request that you:

- **Fully fund both Section 202 and for Section 811** to ensure all contracts are renewed; and
- **Provide an additional \$100 million for Section 202 and \$25 million for Section 811 to create new units of deeply affordable housing for the elderly and persons with disabilities.**

Finally, we want to highlight our grave concerns with this Administration’s assumed budgetary savings in all of the above program accounts related to a pending proposal from HUD that we understand will propose significant changes to the rent structure and possibly occupancy

¹ Econsult Corporation (2011, March). Public Housing Stimulus Funding: A Report on the Economic Impact of Recovery Act Capital Improvements.

² *Id.*

standards for certain HUD residents. HUD has not yet provided this proposal to Congress for review, though what little is known about these potential policy changes raises serious questions about the potential to leave even more low income people without a stable home, making it harder for them to climb the economic ladder and live with dignity. Increasing rent burdens or cutting housing benefits in other ways could have devastating impacts on HUD's ability to serve our nation's most vulnerable households, and they run contrary to the mission of HUD. **We urge you to reject these proposals and any assumptions about corresponding budgetary savings.**

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these requests. Please contact Theresa Dumais with Ranking Member Waters at extension 5-4247 or Jennifer Shapiro with Representative Cleaver at 5-4535 with any questions about this letter.

Sincerely,



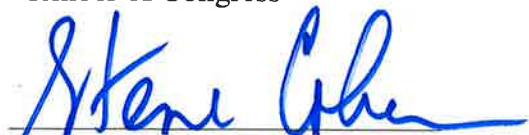
Maxine Waters
Ranking Member
House Financial Services Committee



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Ranking Member
House Financial Services Committee
Subcommittee on Housing and
Insurance



Member of Congress



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