

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2025

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Turner:

As Chairs of the Congressional Public Housing Caucus, we write to express extreme concern about current efforts to eliminate HUD initiatives, programs, and staff critical to public housing. We urge you to consider the impact that recent policies will have on public housing in the United States and to work with Congress to more constructively address this nation's historic fair and affordable housing and homelessness crisis.

Public housing plays a crucial role in supporting 1.6 million low-income, elderly, and disabled residents who would otherwise lack access to safe, decent, or affordable housing in the private market.¹ The average income of a public housing household is \$19,050 and more than three-quarters of public housing residents are children, elderly, or disabled.² Without access to public housing, more American families would escalate into homelessness, which you may know rose by a record 18% in 2024.³ Access to public housing reduces housing instability among the most vulnerable American families, and, by reducing the financial burden of rent, allows families to use limited income for essential needs like food and health care that contribute to greater stability. In some cases, public housing programs are also linked with additional support services such as job training and substance abuse treatment that help residents become more stable and productive.

Following your confirmation, you spoke of the “opportunity to restore HUD to its core mission of supporting strong and sustainable communities and quality, affordable homes – serving the nation’s most vulnerable.”⁴ This rhetoric is incompatible with reports that you, and the “Department of Government Efficiency” (DOGE), have terminated hundreds of probationary employees, plan to slash the Departments workforce by more than half, and have already withheld Department funding serving families, seniors, and people with disabilities.⁵ Initial reports suggest that HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing may see a 50 percent reduction in staff in the coming months.⁶ Such actions are counterproductive and strain resources, reduce program effectiveness, and make it harder to the address public housing needs across the United States.

As you may know, reported workforce reductions at HUD would have a detrimental impact on public housing and public housing stakeholders in several ways including but not limited to:

1. **Increased workload for staff:** Independent reports repeatedly point to capacity gaps across HUD including insufficient staff. Further reducing staff may lead to higher turnover, a loss of institutional knowledge, and an overburden of remaining staff supporting public housing.

¹ HUD, Picture of Subsidized Housing data, 2024, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/assths.html>.

² *Id.*

³ HUD, Annual Homelessness Assessment, 2024, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

⁴ HUD, Press Release, February 2025, “Scott turner Confirmed as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.”

https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/hud_no_25_025#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20path%20ahead%20of%20us,serving%20our%20nation's%20most%20vulnerable.

⁵ NPR, “HUD Employees are Bracing for what they Hear will be ‘Drastic’ Staff Cuts,” February 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/14/g-s1-49177/hud-employees-are-bracing-for-what-they-hear-will-be-drastic-staff-cuts>.

⁶ *Id.*

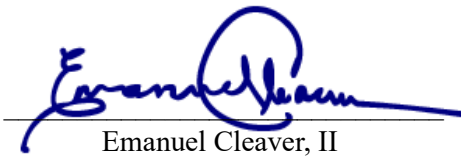
2. **Increased challenges executing policy:** HUD staff play a key role in updating, developing, and implementing new policies. Fewer staff may hamper the ability of the Department to execute policy, adapt to emerging challenges, or provide related program support to public housing stakeholders.
3. **Increased delays in funding and grants administration:** HUD plays a critical role in allocating funding to public housing authorities and other public housing stakeholders. Fewer staff can lead to delays in processing funds and grants and increase difficulties in providing housing services.
4. **Increased delays responding to crisis:** HUD provides guidance and resources to address crises such as natural disasters and economic downturns. Fewer staff may lead to a reduced ability to coordinate efforts and delay recovery and housing relief efforts for affected public housing stakeholders.
5. **Decreased public housing development and rehabilitation:** Public housing projects, particularly those in need of renovation, rely on HUD funding and guidance. Fewer staff may reduce the capacity of the Department to oversee and support the revitalization of public housing properties and delay necessary upgrades and repairs.
6. **Decreased oversight of property conditions:** HUD employees monitor and inspect public housing property conditions to ensure they are decent, safe and sanitary. Fewer staff may lead to reduced oversight and increase the likelihood that properties fall into disrepair.
7. **Increased burdens on public housing authorities:** Public housing authorities depend on HUD for support of operations and technical assistance to manage resources efficiently. Fewer staff may decrease communication, guidance, and oversight leading to inefficiencies, underperformance, and compliance challenges.
8. **Decreased public trust and participation:** Public housing operations rely on collaboration with a network of stakeholders including the public, local governments, private developers, nonprofit organizations and others. Fewer staff may reduce support for external partners, create additional challenges and uncertainty, and reduce HUDs ability to maintain public housing partnerships.
9. **Increased waste:** HUD employees oversee complex programs including the public housing program. Fewer staff may increase costs due to backlogs and longer project timelines and a reduced ability to evaluate public housing programs and policies.
10. **Increased fraud and abuse:** HUD employees monitor programs, enforce regulations, and ensure compliance. Fewer staff may increase the risk of non-compliance and improper use of funds due to reduced oversight capacity and delayed audits and evaluations that allow issues to go undetected for longer periods.

There are fiscally responsible ways to increase Department efficiency that do not lead to negative outcomes for public housing. These alternatives include streamlining processes, leveraging technology and automation, improving cross-departmental communication and collaboration, increasing training and professional development for staff, enhancing transparency and accountability for Department goals, allocating Department resources more impactfully, improving public engagement and services, adopting best practices from other agencies and the private sector, and piloting innovative methods and technologies within the Department itself. The Department's reported approach with DOGE extends far beyond identifying alleged inefficiencies and jeopardizes the ability of the Department to carry out its core mission.

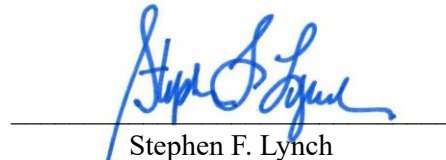
During your Senate confirmation hearing you stated multiple times that “transparency and accountability is key.”⁷ Considering our concerns, and the concerns of the public, we therefore request a written response detailing the exact analysis HUD has conducted related to the impact of planned staff and funding cuts on each of the ten categories listed above by March 7, 2025. Additionally, as Chairs of the Congressional Public Housing Caucus, and members of the House Committee on Financial Services with oversight of HUD, we request a meeting with you to discuss our concerns and the contents of your response letter no later than March 11, 2025.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

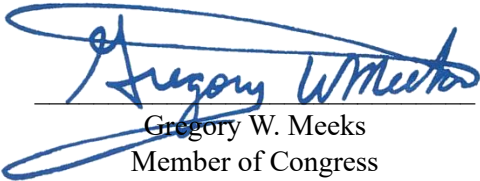
Sincerely,



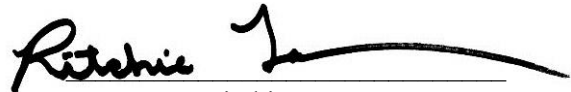
Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

⁷ Testimony of Scott Turner before a United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Hearing entitled “Nomination Hearing.” January 16 2025, <https://www.banking.senate.gov/hearings/01/09/2025/nomination-hearing>.