

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 5, 2014

The Honorable Julian Castro
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Castro:

Congratulations on your confirmation as the 16th Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). We look forward to working closely with you in the months ahead.

As you work with Department staff to develop an agenda that addresses our most pressing housing needs, we urge you to prioritize finalizing improvements to HUD's rule defining HUD program participants' obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. For more than 45 years, the Fair Housing Act has required grantees receiving federal housing or community development funds to administer these resources to "affirmatively further" fair housing. Because a person's environment has an extraordinary impact on their access to education, transportation, jobs, and other opportunities, the legal requirement to affirmatively furthering fair housing is an important tool in our efforts to eliminate the inequalities that persist in our society.

As documented in both a 2009 HUD internal report and a 2010 report by the independent Government Accountability Office (GAO), limited oversight of fair housing planning and activities, combined with a lack of formal guidance and assistance from HUD, has likely diminished the importance of fair housing in the eyes of some HUD grantees. Communities' failure to prioritize fair access to housing has undermined repeated legislative efforts to eliminate housing discrimination and continues to have real social and economic costs in our communities.

A 2009 Department of Justice settlement highlighted deficiencies in grantees' current efforts to fulfill their fair housing responsibilities, but it did not address weaknesses in fair housing planning and oversight that contribute to more widespread systemic noncompliance. HUD's recent Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing proposed rule put forth critical improvements to current policy that would address many of the deficiencies with grantees' compliance with the Fair Housing Act. We urge you to swiftly complete a final rule that provides clear guidance, new data tools, and improved oversight as outlined in HUD's July 2013 proposal to ensure that all HUD grantees are working to make their communities more inclusive in the spirit of the Fair Housing Act.

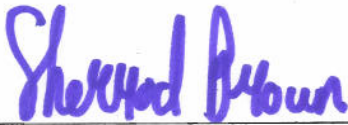
Data-driven planning and clear, articulated goals will clarify the responsibilities of state and local jurisdictions and housing authorities under the Fair Housing Act and will ensure that fair housing issues are identified and addressed in ways that provide meaningful benefits to residents. We applaud HUD's commitment to providing data and technical assistance to grantees and public

housing authorities (PHAs). This assistance will help jurisdictions evaluate and address existing impediments to fair housing while reducing the burden on participants. HUD should carefully consider input it has already received and move forward in assessing public comments on the proposed data scope and quality so that a final Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule may be implemented in all communities as quickly as possible.

As the HUD and GAO studies have shown, accountability and enforcement are also essential elements of any fair housing system. The proposed rule's reporting requirement for communities' Assessments of Fair Housing would help hold jurisdictions accountable to community members and HUD as they address local housing needs. Adding benchmarks to evaluate grantees' and PHAs' progress toward their fair housing goals would provide HUD with a mechanism to keep progress toward fair housing goals on track.

By incorporating fair housing objectives into the Consolidated Plan and Public Housing Agency Plan processes, the rule would ensure that fair housing is not an afterthought but a meaningful part of community development and revitalization. Thank you for your continued dedication to creating a stronger, fairer housing system.

Sincerely,



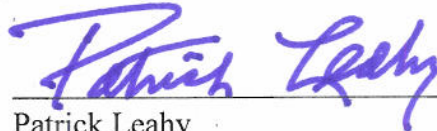
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



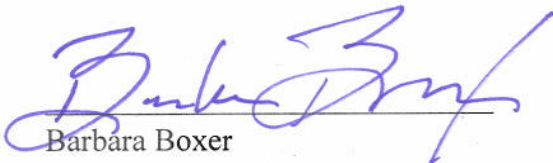
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Dick Durbin
United States Senator



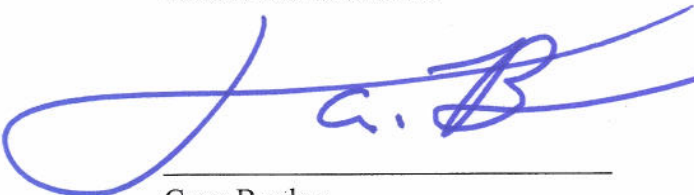
Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



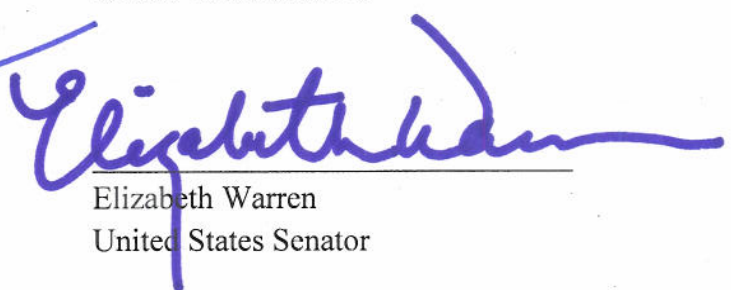
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



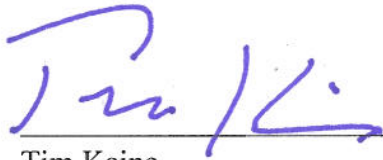
Al Franken
United States Senator



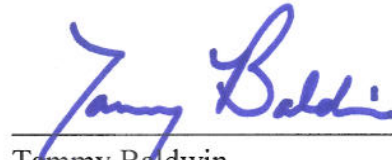
Cory Booker
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



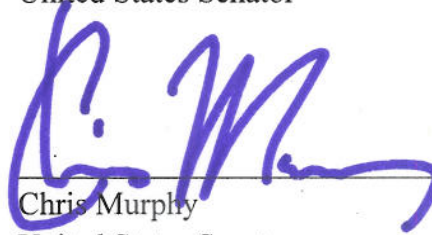
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



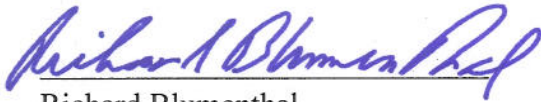
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Chris Murphy
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator