



City of Lawrence

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April 28, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
U.S. Senate
Room 109
Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202-224-4774
202-224-3514 (Fax)

RE: Funding Threats to HUD Funded Housing and Community Development Programs

Dear Senator Roberts:

The City of Lawrence wishes to express our support for the HUD funded housing and community development programs and to voice our opposition to the threatened elimination and/or major cuts of these programs in FY18 and beyond. Elimination or major cuts to these programs, including the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the HOME Investment Partnership program (HOME), and the Public Housing voucher program and capital fund, would severely slow down or eliminate local programs and projects that directly impact the lives of our low and moderate income citizens as well as contributing to the local economy.

In the City of Lawrence, the Lawrence Douglas County Housing Authority (LDCHA) provides affordable housing through its public housing, Section 8 housing vouchers and other programs for 2,246 residents, 1441 households of the City of Lawrence. The proposed cuts of approximately \$40.7 billion or 13% in housing and community development programs would result in the estimated loss of about \$95,409 in LDCHA's public housing program - \$67,251 for Capital Fund program and the loss of funding for 6.6% of its vouchers, impacting 50 households in its Section 8 housing choice vouchers program. This would have an immediate and detrimental effect on LDCHA's public housing program, which provides safe, decent, and affordable housing, and a devastating impact on the ability to maintain the public housing property owned by the City.

The HOME program is a vital resource to our community, providing funding for projects and services that directly impact the lives of our low and moderate income citizens, as



well as the community as a whole. HOME funding for the City of Lawrence in 2016 was \$336,152. The HOME program is a crucial source of affordable housing funding in the community and the impacts will be widely felt with an elimination or reduction in these funds. HOME funds assist with housing homeless families in LDCHA's Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program as well as providing vital housing development funding to develop affordable housing units.

The HOME TBRA program assists approximately 20-25 households a year with bringing homeless families off the streets and into transitional housing. The family pairs their lease with case management and both parties work to stabilize and maintain housing. Once the program is successfully completed, the family typically moves on to permanent housing options, including the Section 8 program. The TBRA program has an 83% success rate of families completing the program and staying housed.

The HOME development funds allow the city's Community Development Housing Organization, Tenants to Homeowners, Inc., to develop affordable units to add to the Lawrence Community Housing Trust, thus remaining affordable in perpetuity. Habitat for Humanity also accesses HOME funds to assist with foundations for their homes.

The HOME funding is a crucial source of affordable housing financing for the City of Lawrence. An elimination or major cut to that funding would certainly negatively affect community revitalization and development activities as well as services for low and moderate-income citizens.

The CDBG program is another vital resource to our community, providing funding for projects and services that directly impact the lives of our low and moderate income citizens, as well as the community as a whole. CDBG funding for the City of Lawrence in 2016 was \$647,738 and the City leverages those funds to provide numerous improvements and services throughout the community.

Through the years, CDBG funds have provided housing improvements including comprehensive housing rehabilitation, emergency repairs and furnace replacement, and weatherization improvements including attic insulation, storm windows, and weather stripping of doors to several thousand low and moderate-income homeowners. These individuals are able to remain in their homes, contributing to the community's tax base and local economy. Additionally, since 1994, funds have been provided to make 312 families/individuals first time homebuyers. Without this funding, some of these families would never be able to attain the American dream of homeownership.

Other important projects funded with CDBG funds over the history of the program include repairs to the structures that house numerous social service agencies in Lawrence or funding to provide those services. Along with the housing rehabilitation efforts previously mentioned, these structural repairs help revitalize and stabilize older neighborhoods. These include facilities that provide services for domestic violence survivors and their families, homeless individuals and families, unwed and pregnant teens, women and men recovering from substance abuse, mental health and health

services, legal services, child care, youth education and housing, as well as general services such as food and clothing. These agencies provide services to thousands of Lawrence citizens each year, the majority of which are low and moderate income.

CDBG funds have also funded infrastructure activities that keep this community viable including such projects as the installation of miles of infill sidewalk and damaged sidewalk replacement, installation or replacement of water lines, sewer lines and drainage improvements, street improvements and parks improvements. Without CDBG funding, many of these projects would not have been completed and citizens would not have access to needed services. CDBG provides the flexibility to fund a myriad of activities, fill gaps where needed, and leverage and attract additional resources to projects. This combination of CDBG with other resources adds to our local economy through the purchase of goods and services and adds to the betterment of the lives of our local citizenry through improved neighborhoods and services. An elimination or major cut to that funding would certainly negatively affect community revitalization and development activities as well as services for low and moderate income citizens.

On behalf of the City of Lawrence, I ask you to oppose any legislation that would eliminate or majorly reduce funding for HUD funded housing and community development programs in FY18 and beyond. I would also like to extend an invitation to you and your staff to tour our public housing, HOME, and CDBG funded projects to see the benefits of these programs firsthand. We thank you, in advance, for your support of HUD funded housing and community development programs. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Tom Markus,
City Manager, City of Lawrence