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COUNCIL

June 8, 2021

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chairwoman
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Waters and Ranking Member McHenry:

The undersigned national associations represent for-profit and non-profit owners, operators, developers, lenders and property managers and housing cooperatives involved in the provision of rental housing, both affordable and conventional. As the Committee holds a hearing entitled “Universal Vouchers: Ending Homelessness and Expanding Economic Opportunity in America,” we are writing today to urge the Committee to support efforts to take further steps to eliminate the overlapping and redundant aspects associated with the Housing Choice Voucher Program, while also ensuring reliable funding is in place for this vital program.

We have long-supported the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, which provides rental subsidies to approximately two million very low-income households who obtain housing in the private rental market. Intended to broaden the range of housing choices for families seeking affordable housing, the HCV Program has proven to be an important tool for subsidizing rents for low-income families. In addition, Housing Choice Vouchers can be leveraged to build new, or rehabilitate existing, affordable housing—a necessity in today’s tight rental markets.

Reform the Program to Reduce Regulatory Barriers

Important reforms were included in the industry supported Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA) signed into law in 2016 and sponsored by Housing Subcommittee Chair Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO) and Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO). We believe the HCV Program would also benefit from the updated enhancements contained in S. 1820, the Choice in Affordable Housing Act. This bipartisan measure was recently introduced by Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) and Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND) and developed to further address the current myriad of overlapping and redundant procedures, which have deterred many professional owners and operators from participating in the HCV Program and therefore, have limited families’ ability to access high-opportunity communities.

We strongly support the Choice in Affordable Housing Act which authorizes and directs additional resources to attract and retain landlords in the HCV Program. Permitting voucher administrators to provide signing bonuses to landlords in low-poverty areas, helping with security deposits, reducing inspection delays and expanding the use of neighborhood-specific data to set rental subsidies are practical strategies that we believe will yield the desired results.

Fully Fund this Voluntary Program to Enhance Participation

Our nation needs an appropriations process that provides certainty for both the people it serves, as well as housing providers. Our organizations remain concerned that long-term funding for assisted housing is in jeopardy. Uncertainty regarding future funding exacerbates the pressure on the market by raising concerns about the reliability of federal commitments among owners, managers, lenders and residents. We urge Congress to fully fund the HCV Program to ensure the elderly, the disabled, veterans and family households have a place to call home.

Furthermore, it is also imperative for lawmakers to reinforce the voluntary nature of the program and reject calls for “source of income” mandates on housing providers. Congress specifically made participation voluntary because of the regulatory burdens associated with it. Instead of changing the voluntary nature of the program, we urge you to reduce regulatory barriers and invest in programs that have proven to increase voluntary property owner participation in the HCV Program. This would enable more positive program outcomes for both low- and moderate-income families as well as housing providers.

Thank you for your commitment to housing low-income families through this important public-private partnership that is exemplified by the Housing Choice Voucher Program. We stand ready to work with you develop policies to address these challenges.

Sincerely,

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Institute of Real Estate Management
Manufactured Housing Institute
National Affordable Housing Management
Association
National Apartment Association

National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Housing
Cooperatives
National Association of REALTORS®
National Leased Housing Association
National Multifamily Housing Council