

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Carson:

We write today to express our deep, serious concerns about your Department's proposals of a three-hundred percent increase in rent for low-income households while attaching more burdensome, unnecessary, and duplicative work requirements to rental assistance subsidies. These proposals are a direct assault on low-income families that will worsen an already-dire affordable housing crisis in California.

These proposals would leave even more low-income people without stable housing, making it harder for them to achieve upward economic mobility, and live with dignity. If we begin to cut access to critical resources like the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program, even more low-income individuals and families would be homeless, living in substandard or overcrowded conditions, or struggling to meet other basic needs because too much of their limited income would go toward paying rent. For low-income families, this means that once rent is paid there is often very little remaining for other essentials such as groceries, healthcare, childcare, and transportation. And for many, the rent increases that you are proposing would further thin the line between having a roof over their head and sleeping on the streets.

According to a 2017 study from the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, communities in California are already some of the most cost-burdened in the nation. More than half of residents in the cities of Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego are considered to be cost-burdened, meaning that they spend at least 30 percent, but often much more, of their income on rent. In Los Angeles, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$2,037. In San Francisco, it's \$3,239. Recognizing the impact these market trends have on homelessness, some Californians have voted to tax themselves to help solve the housing crisis and local leaders have stepped up with some truly innovative initiatives, which we encourage you to learn more about. A lack of support at the federal level would be like pulling the rug out from under these communities working so hard to legitimately affect positive change.

Specifically, we think it would be helpful if you and your Department submitted in writing responses to the following questions:

1. Please provide the basis and policy rationale for such proposals, including any unpublished staff work or email communications.
2. What inputs or data were used in making the determination to increase rent by three hundred percent?
3. What sensitivity analysis or research has been conducted to show the impact to participation rates?
4. How will your proposal benefit low-income California families?

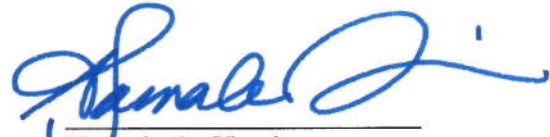
As California's Senators, we will not stand for such an obvious attack on our constituents and our State. We strongly urge you to reconsider this dangerous proposal as soon as possible. We also implore you and your agency to lead by example and commit to engage in proactive discussions with critical stakeholders who can produce fresher ideas and common-sense solutions that will actually help struggling families, not punish them.

We look forward to working with you to help hardworking families in California and across the country pursue their American dream of safe and affordable housing.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator