



Hon. Judy Biggert, Chair
Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity
Committee on Financial Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Luis V. Gutierrez, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity
Committee on Financial Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 6, 2012

Dear Representatives Biggert and Gutierrez:

We are writing to commend the Committee for the inclusion within the Affordable Housing and Self-Sufficiency Improvement Act of 2012 of the provisions in Sections 301 and 302 designed to help families in subsidized housing build assets and make progress toward economic security.

Families in subsidized housing face many obstacles to economic self-sufficiency. Over the past 20 years, the Family Self-Sufficiency program has helped tens of thousands to overcome these obstacles by providing participating families with an economic incentive to increase their earnings along with referrals to services that help families build skills and find and keep jobs. The Family Self-Sufficiency program has been hampered, however, by inconsistent funding. In addition, the program has only been available to residents of public housing and families with Section 8 housing vouchers. Families residing in privately-owned Section 8 housing have not been eligible.

Proposed Section 301 would strengthen the Family Self-Sufficiency program by expanding eligibility to residents of project-based Section 8 developments, stabilizing funding for the program, creating incentives for agencies to grow their programs to serve more families, and making other important changes to strengthen the program.

Proposed Section 302 would complement Section 301 by authorizing a rigorous research demonstration designed to test alternative approaches for taking family self-sufficiency initiatives to scale. Even as Section 301 offers the benefits of the existing Family Self-Sufficiency program to tens of thousands of additional families, Section 302 would test self-sufficiency



approaches that could be offered at little or no cost to millions of families living in subsidized housing nationwide. As the research of our affiliate, the Center for Housing Policy confirms, there is a great need to expand the base of research evidence documenting what policies are most effective for helping families in subsidized housing build assets, increase their earnings, and make a successful transition to market-rate housing.

The National Housing Conference represents a broad spectrum of organizations working in various capacities to help meet the nation's need for affordable housing. Within our coalition, there will likely be a diversity of viewpoints about the Affordable Housing and Self-Sufficiency Improvement Act of 2012 as a whole and even about Sections 301 and 302 specifically. However, we feel comfortable saying that Sections 301 and 302 represent serious, thoughtful attempts to strengthen the nation's policies focused on helping families in subsidized housing make progress toward economic security. We would urge Congress to work closely with the practitioner community to address any concerns they may identify to strengthen these sections and make a lasting contribution to residents' well-being.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ethan Handelman'.

Ethan Handelman
Vice President for Policy and Advocacy
National Housing Conference

CC: Hon. Spencer Bacchus; Hon. Barney Frank