

June 9, 2011

Daniel Inouye, Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

Thad Cochran, Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Capitol, Room S-206
Washington, DC 20510

Harold Rogers, Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
United States Capitol, Room H-307
Washington, DC 20515

Norm Dicks, Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senate and House Appropriation Committee Leadership:

The Green Affordable Housing Coalition is committed to sustainable housing that offers economic, health and environmental benefits to low-income families and communities. Our Coalition represents over 20 diverse organizations focused on building and preserving through retrofits affordable housing using green, energy efficient standards. We recognize the substantial progress federal housing and energy programs are making to create and rehabilitate affordable housing that saves energy, conserves resources, and provides a healthier living environment for residents. We applaud and support these efforts, and encourage you to continue funding these important programs at the levels requested in the President's 2012 budget.

In 2009, residential buildings were responsible for the consumption of 22% of the energy used by major economic sectors.¹ The vast majority of this energy was used to heat and cool homes which is essential to the health and well-being of residents. Low-income families and seniors are particularly vulnerable to escalating utility costs; many already pay nearly 25 percent of their income for utilities compared to the four percent paid by median income families.² The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) spends in excess of \$5 billion annually on utility costs³. Programs that improve the energy efficiency of low-income homes, including federally-subsidized housing, represent smart management of taxpayer dollars as well as responsible stewardship of our country's resources. Even modest energy savings would yield considerable budget savings.

A number of HUD programs, including the Public Housing Capital Fund, HOPE VI, Section 202, and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, promote the incorporation of green building features into projects either using incentives or as a specific requirement of funding. National green building programs such as LEED, the Enterprise Green Communities Criteria, the National Green Building Standard as well as regional and local programs such as Earthcraft and BuiltGreen (Seattle, WA) provide the guidance and certifications necessary to ensure that robust green building standards are employed.

HUD also encourages home improvements that are designed to be more energy efficient and provide an improved indoor environmental quality through the new pilot PowerSaver program, which provides energy loans to homeowners; the Healthy Homes Initiative which addresses housing-related health and

¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, http://www.eia.gov/energyexplained/index.cfm?page=us_energy_use

² U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/library/energy/homelessness.cfm>

³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_12072.pdf

safety hazards harmful to low-income residents; and the Sustainable Communities Partnership with the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Energy efficiency programs developed by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), ranging from Energy Star (a joint DOE and EPA program) to the State Energy and Weatherization Assistance and Weatherization Innovation Pilot Programs, provide the financial and technical assistance states and localities need to help their residents create homes that are designed to be more energy efficient. These programs address key energy priorities specific to their respective states as well as help residents save money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also incorporates energy efficiency standards into several of their key housing programs including the Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Program which makes direct development loans for rental housing in rural communities and the Section 514/516 Farm Labor Housing Program which provides funding to buy, build, improve or repair housing for farm laborers.

These programs promote sustainable and affordable green housing while helping address our nation's energy and climate change issues and some of the daunting challenges faced by low-income families. Making all affordable housing more energy efficient, environmentally sustainable, healthy and economical helps conserve scarce government resources, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, promotes energy independence, and lowers healthcare costs, which helps provide an overall better quality of life for low-income families and communities.

We urge you to recognize and support the great strides that these and other federal housing and energy programs are making to foster green and sustainable affordable housing by funding these programs at the levels in the President's 2012 budget request.

Sincerely,

California Housing Partnership
Commonwealth Housing Legal Services
Council for Energy Friendly Affordable Housing
Emerald Cities Collaborative
Enterprise Community Partners
Habitat for Humanity International
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Housing Conference
National Housing Trust
Rebuilding Together
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future
U.S. Green Building Council