

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 8, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Carson:

We write to again express concerns about the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) decision to close the Mary Alice Meadows (MAM) and Sunset Terrace (ST) housing complexes in Thebes, Illinois, and relocate the approximately 28 families living there.

Given HUD is prohibited from funding or creating new public housing, should Alexander County Housing Authority's (ACHA) Inventory Removal Application for MAM and ST be approved, Illinois will permanently lose this important federal resource. Further, the significant consequences for residents and the local community posed by the potential removal of these complexes are particularly acute in light of HUD's decision to demolish the Elmwood and McBride public housing complexes also located in Alexander County, Illinois.

We continue to have questions and concerns about both the reasoning and legal justification used to support the decision to submit an Inventory Removal Application for MAM and ST instead of attempting to rehabilitate these complexes and retain them as a resource for Alexander County residents. Further, we question whether residents were sufficiently consulted and their needs properly considered in this process. We are eager to continue the conversation with you and your staff on these issues.

Most immediately our concern is ensuring the health and safety of the families still living in MAM and ST are prioritized. While we are encouraged that at our request, HUD is currently developing a workplan to complete an assessment of the current living conditions of every occupied unit in MAM and ST, it is troubling that this assessment had not already been completed or deemed necessary to inform HUD's decision to relocate residents and to ensure proper steps are being taken to address present health and safety hazards.

HUD has cited immediate health and safety concerns present in the MAM and ST units and the inability of ACHA to feasibly remedy these hazards as justification for both relocating residents and submitting an Inventory Removal Application for the complexes. However, despite acknowledging significant health and safety hazards are present in MAM and ST, HUD continues to require residents to pay rent to live in these units, despite rent having been abated for residents who are relocating from hazardous units in Elmwood and McBride. While HUD recently indicated its plan to partially abate rent for MAM and ST residents, this plan fails to fully address the situation faced by these families. Residents who are being forced to relocate

because of the severity of the health and safety hazards posed by their current housing should not be forced to pay one penny for dangerous and unsafe housing.

In consideration of the above concerns, we urge HUD to take the following actions:

1. Fully abate rent for MAM and ST residents in consideration of the health and safety hazards faced by residents and the admitted inability of ACHA to return the units to habitable conditions.
2. Guarantee MAM and ST residents will receive the same 14-month lookback period for voucher eligibility as afforded to Elmwood and McBride residents. While HUD has notified our offices that it possess the adequate resources to accommodate imposing a 14-month lookback period for MAM and ST residents, HUD has not yet committed to guaranteeing available resources will be used for this purpose.
3. Develop an updated written relocation plan for MAM and ST residents that takes into consideration the unique needs and circumstances of MAM and ST residents. While HUD has indicated that it is reusing the relocation plan it developed for the relocation of Elmwood and McBride residents, the plan as provided to our office does not appear to have been amended in any way to reference MAM and ST residents or to account for their unique needs and circumstances.
4. Commit to ensuring residents at MAM and ST will have continued and sufficient access to mobility and relocation specialists to assist their relocation process.

We appreciate your timely consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator