

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 3, 2018

Dr. Benjamin S. Carson Sr., MD.
Secretary
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Carson,

We write to you today as Members of Congress representing New York City to share our profound concerns on the newly released “Making Affordable Housing Work Act” by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). By raising the monthly rent on low-income households, the lives of our constituents will be fundamentally harmed. It will deprive individuals and families of housing stability, and access to economic opportunity.

The decision to increase the percentage share of rent from 30 percent of *adjusted* monthly income to 35 percent of *unadjusted* monthly income is irresponsible. Tripling the minimum rent is cruel. This proposal will force tenants to choose between basic nutrition, access to health care, and any semblance of financial self-sufficiency. These are the real, heartbreaking decisions that parents, grandparents, and those responsible for dependents will have to take into consideration when setting a weekly or monthly budget in the face of even greater financial restrictions because of this proposal.

The far-reaching impact of this proposal, applying to Public Housing, Project Based Rental Assistance, Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Section 8 Project Based Vouchers, Section 202 Elderly Housing and 811 Supportive Housing for people with disabilities, would be felt by more than 300,000 households in New York City. This would be especially punitive towards single parents with children, working families, and especially burdensome to those responsible for the care and livelihood of their dependents, or taking care of the ill or elderly. For New York City residents, the detrimental effects of your proposal, is not unfounded speculation. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) have expressed grave concern on impacts to the people they serve. A HUD mandate to impose flat rents in public housing in the late 2000s resulted in delinquent rental payments, greater rent burdens, and administrative turmoil. This recent history has not been forgotten.

Examination of this policy on a household level has not assuaged any of our concerns. Eliminating income adjustments for medical expenses and child care would create additional obstacles to employment for people on housing assistance. In New York City’s Public Housing, over 19,000 seniors and/or disabled households would lose their medical expense deduction and nearly 2,900 families with children would lose their child care expense deduction. To imply that those receiving federal housing assistance aren’t already working hard to make ends meet is downright insulting.

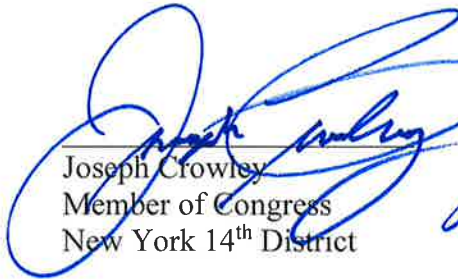
Affordable and Public Housing is of great concern to each of our offices and plurality of our constituents. NYCHA and HPD provide vital accommodations for the elderly, disabled-persons, and low-income families with dependent children. We do not understand how this policy as prescribed would be constructive when by all accounts it would be destructive. The outcome of this measure would be counterproductive at best. Secretary Carson, there is no context where the maxim of “*counterproductive at best*” should ever be the standard that HUD shall endeavor to reach or that our constituents expect of us.

We, the undersigned Members of Congress representing New York City, have and will continue to fight for the needs of our constituents. This proposal as currently constituted is a direct affront to the mission of HUD. We urge you – as we have always done in our individual and collective outreach since your ascension to HUD – to work with public housing residents, public housing authorities, and community-based stakeholders towards inclusive and constructive solutions.

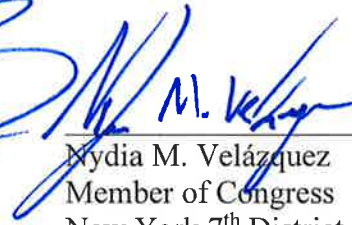
Sincerely,



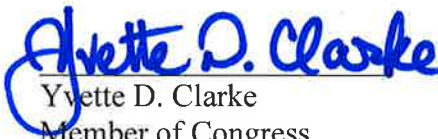
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