

June 30, 2016

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The real estate industry urges you to co-sponsor S. 3083, “The Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA – Housing Modernization Act), introduced by Senators Scott (R-SC), Menendez (D-NJ), Blunt (R-MO) and Coons (D-DE). Cosponsoring this bill will demonstrate support for the same common sense reforms to federal rental assistance programs that the U.S. House of Representatives passed unanimously in H.R. 3700, also titled “The Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act.” Our industry believes it is imperative for Congress to pass legislation that will improve the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (Voucher Program) for both residents and owners alike: maximizing the impact of taxpayer dollars and eliminating inefficiencies are a must. Please cosponsor S. 3083, and support an expedited Senate vote on H.R. 3700.

Our organizations represent owners, management companies, lenders, builders and developers, housing agencies and housing cooperatives. We have long-supported the Voucher Program, which provides rental subsidies to approximately two million very low-income households who obtain housing in the private rental market. Intended to broaden the range of housing choices for families seeking affordable housing, the Voucher Program has proven to be effective in helping low-income families find decent, safe and affordable housing. In addition, Housing Choice Vouchers can be leveraged to build new, or rehabilitate existing, affordable housing, a necessity in today’s tight rental markets.

However, in spite of its overall success, the Voucher Program suffers under the weight of too many inefficient and duplicative requirements. The myriad of overlapping and redundant procedures have made it difficult to administer and have deterred many professional owners and operators from participating. As such, we have worked diligently with Congress for several years to formulate common sense legislation to streamline the Voucher Program.

The Housing Modernization Act encourages efficiency within the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) rental housing programs and facilitates greater private sector participation in affordable housing overall. An important part of this effort for the Voucher Program, in particular, is the streamlining of federal regulations. Simplifying the rules for program participants will reduce administrative burdens and lower costs, while increasing local flexibility. This, in turn, will incentivize more owners to participate in the delivery of affordable housing.

The following provisions of the Housing Modernization Act are particularly significant:

- **Streamlining the Property Inspection Process.** Steps have already been taken to eliminate duplicative inspections through the budget process. This provision expands those efforts by permitting immediate tenant occupancy if the unit has been inspected within the past 24 months and has no life-threatening conditions. This is important for both residents and owners alike because it reduces the length of time a unit is vacant and allows tenants to move into the unit without delay.
- **Extending the Contract Term for Project-Based Vouchers from 15 to 20 Years.** This section will help facilitate the use of project-based vouchers in Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties. The rental subsidies provided by vouchers help LIHTC owners meet the need to serve extremely low-income households. The bill also makes other changes that will advance housing opportunities and ease transactional barriers.

We urge the Senate to move with urgency to pass HOTMA/H.R. 3700 and to send it to the President's desk for enactment.

Sincerely,

Council for Affordable and Rural Housing
Institute of Real Estate Management
LeadingAge
National Affordable Housing Management
Association
National Apartment Association

National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Housing Cooperatives
National Association of REALTORS
National Leased Housing Association
National Multifamily Housing Council

June 29, 2016

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

The undersigned organizations, which include a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the housing affordability realm, urge you to co-sponsor “The Housing Opportunity through Modernization Act (HOTMA)” introduced by Senators Menendez, Scott, Coons and Blunt as S. 3083 on June 22, 2016. Co-sponsoring this bill will demonstrate support for the same common sense reforms to federal rental assistance programs that the U.S. House of Representatives passed unanimously in H.R. 3700, also titled “The Housing Opportunity through Modernization Act.” HOTMA represents the best of bipartisan work and compromise. We urge you to cosponsor S. 3083, and support an expedited Senate vote on H.R. 3700.

Our nation faces tremendous housing needs. This legislation is an important step forward to address a number of significant items that have enjoyed broad consensus over the years. There is more to be done to address housing and community development needs, but HOTMA represents solid progress in the right direction. If enacted, this bipartisan bill would build on the effectiveness of federal rental assistance while achieving some modest savings.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s rental assistance programs face difficult budget pressures, and this reform legislation would help state and local agencies more efficiently manage limited funds to better serve families in need. These reforms ease administrative burdens for housing agencies and owners, while delivering fairer and more efficient assistance to low-income families. In addition, the bill provides new tools to preserve affordable housing, reduce homelessness, increase self-sufficiency and expand access to areas of greater opportunity.

Importantly, HOTMA would make these improvements while leaving in place the core characteristics that have helped make federal rental assistance programs effective. The bill’s rental assistance provisions, taken together, also avoid any cost increase, and could modestly reduce the cost of providing the current level of assistance.

Congress has vetted most of the bill’s provisions for nearly a decade as part of earlier proposals that have had broad support in Congress and among stakeholders, but have never become law. We strongly encourage the Senate to move with urgency to pass HOTMA/H.R. 3700 and to send it the President’s desk for enactment.

We stand ready to work with you to help achieve this goal.

B'nai B'rith International
Catholic Charities USA
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
Housing Task Force
Corporation for Enterprise Development
CSH (Corporation for Supportive Housing)
Council for Affordable and Rural Housing
Council of Large Public Housing
Authorities
Enterprise Community Partners
Housing Assistance Council
Housing Partnership Network
Institute of Real Estate Management
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the
United States
LeadingAge
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)
National Affordable Housing Management
Association
National AIDS Housing Coalition
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Apartment Association
National Association of Affordable
Housing Lenders
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Housing and
Redevelopment Officials
National Association of Housing
Cooperatives
National Association of REALTORS™
National Council of State Housing
Agencies
National Development Council
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Housing Conference
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Trust
National Leased Housing Association
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Multifamily Housing Council
NETWORK, a National Catholic Social
Justice Lobby
Public Housing Authorities Directors
Association
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the
Future (SAHF)
Technical Assistance Collaborative
The Salvation Army, National
Headquarters