

January 29, 2016

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

The National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC) and National Apartment Association (NAA) offer our support for H.R. 3700, the “Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2015,” (Housing Modernization Act) and urge the House of Representatives to pass the bill. Of special significance to our members are those elements of the legislation dealing with the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (Voucher Program). The Voucher Program is one of the most successful private sector solutions for providing affordable rental housing for families in communities across the country.

For more than 20 years, NMHC and NAA have partnered in a joint legislative program to provide a single voice for America's apartment industry. Our combined memberships are engaged in all aspects of the apartment industry, including ownership, development, management and finance. NMHC represents the principal officers of the apartment industry's largest and most prominent firms. As a federation of nearly 170 state and local affiliates, NAA is comprised of over 69,000 members representing more than 8.1 million apartment homes throughout the United States and Canada.

NMHC/NAA strongly support the Voucher Program, which has long served as America's primary rental housing subsidy. It provides subsidized rents for low-income families in private rental housing and is a successful, scalable, private sector strategy to meet affordable housing needs. Importantly, it allows families to choose their own housing and helps reduce concentrations of poverty.

The Voucher Program is plagued with inefficiencies and onerous bureaucratic requirements that increase the cost of rent to voucher holders and discourage private owners from participating. Owners who do participate must sign a three-way lease with the resident and the housing authority. Further, they are subjected to cumbersome program restrictions, such as repetitive unit inspections, complex resident eligibility certification and other burdensome regulatory paperwork.

The Voucher Program has also been plagued with a flawed and volatile funding system, which undermines private sector confidence in the program. As Congress continues to focus on austerity measures and deficit reduction, insufficient funding is expected to be worse in the near-term budget cycles. While we remain concerned with the funding, we are pleased with the common sense reforms included in the bill that will help control costs, improving the program for both residents and property owners.

NMHC/NAA strongly support the provisions included in H.R. 3700 listed below:

- **Streamlined Property Inspections** – Improving the property inspection process is sorely needed. While some progress has been made, this legislation will allow residents immediate access to housing, as long as the property meets stringent federal guidelines. This change will continue to ensure housing quality and avoid costly delays currently associated with unit lease-ups under the voucher program.
- **Extending Contract Terms Helps Preserve Housing** – Currently, the initial contract term for participation in the Project-Based Section 8 program is 15 years. The Housing Modernization Act provides added flexibility for Public Housing Authorities to extend the contract term for project-based vouchers from 15 to 20 years, thereby preserving housing and providing both the resident and the owner with certainty.

Lawmakers should take action to maximize the ability of the Voucher Program to meet the affordable housing needs of the nation's citizens. We urge all members of the House of Representatives to vote in favor of the Housing Modernization Act.

Sincerely,



Douglas M. Bibby
President
National Multifamily Housing Council



Douglas S. Culkin, CAE
President & CEO
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