

**Chairman Susan Collins Opening Statement**  
**Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban**  
**Development, and Related Agencies**

**Hearing to Review the FY2020 Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Housing and**  
**Urban Development**

**April 3, 2019**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Today I am pleased to welcome the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Dr. Ben Carson, who will testify on the President's fiscal year 2020 budget request. I am also pleased to be joined today by my friend, and our Ranking Member, Senator Jack Reed.

Thanks to the previous two-year budget agreement, we were able to provide \$54 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the F.Y. 2019 appropriations bill.

The Administration's FY 2020 request for HUD does not address this cap and highlights why we cannot return to sequestration funding levels. The request, excluding F.H.A. and Ginnie Mae receipts, is \$44.1 billion, a reduction that is 18 percent below the F.Y. 2019 enacted level. It includes provisions that were rejected as part of our deliberations last year, and I predict that many of those same program eliminations and other cost-shifting gimmicks will once again be rejected. The request again reflects a significant realignment of the federal role in housing and community development. Just a few of the programs eliminated in the Administration's budget include: the Community Development Block Grant, the HOME program, VASH, Family Unification vouchers, youth homelessness grants, the Public Housing Capital Fund, and the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative.

Two of the programs that the Administration has once again requested to eliminate, C.D.B.G. and HOME, are specifically designed to leverage other funding sources to further locally driven priorities. C.D.B.G. provides very flexible funding for critical water and sewer improvements, public services for seniors, revitalization of distressed downtowns, and countless other worthwhile projects that serve low and moderate-income communities. This essential resource for state and local governments lies at the heart of HUD's community development mission.

Low-income households face an affordable housing shortage across the country, and in many locations that shortage is reaching crisis levels. That's why I'm concerned about some of the changes included in this budget. Moderate-income families are being hurt also by a shortage of affordable housing. The very people who make our communities thrive – the school teachers, firefighters, police officers, and nurses – find that they can no longer afford to live in the communities they serve. And yet, the Administration's proposal eliminates both the Housing Trust Fund and the HOME program.

The budget request also proposes steep cuts to HUD's rental assistance programs. It assumes the enactment of proposals to shift the cost of rental assistance more and more to already struggling working families — proposals that were soundly rejected last year.

The Administration's request does not include funding for new HUD-VASH vouchers. These vouchers have been critical in reducing veterans' homelessness by 49 percent since 2010.

While I am deeply troubled by many of the Administration's proposals, I also know that there are areas where HUD and this Committee share common goals. A priority we share is the elimination of the risk of lead paint exposure for children. Reducing lead paint exposure has been a priority of mine and of Senator Reed since we joined this committee, and I fully know that Secretary Carson shares this commitment as well. His background makes him uniquely qualified to understand not only the need to reduce lead paint exposure, but also the long-term consequences of failing to act. That's one reason why I was so pleased that Secretary Carson recently came to Lewiston, Maine, to see how HUD's Lead Hazard Mitigation grants, along with programs like Choice Neighborhoods and C.D.B.G., are changing lives, improving the health of our children, and transforming neighborhoods. And I want to commend the Secretary for the Department's request of a record-high \$290 million for the Office of Lead Hazard Control — an increase of \$11 million more than the F.Y. 19 enacted level. That's a welcome bright spot in this budget.

Mr. Secretary, I look forward to hearing from you, and I now turn to Senator Reed for his opening statement.

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