



Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen

House Committee on Appropriations

Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee
Secretary Ben Carson
June 8, 2017
Opening Statement As Prepared

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time and I also want to welcome Secretary Ben Carson to the Appropriations Committee. We look forward to your testimony and hearing your frank and candid views on the many issues.

Today's hearing is an important part of the oversight duties of this Committee. Now that we have formally received the Administration's budget request, the Committee will undertake a thorough analysis. We will go through each and every budget line, question every witness and demand credible spending justifications and only then will we make our own determinations on the best use of tax-dollars.

We intend to put forward a complete set of appropriations bills that adequately fund important programs while working to reduce or eliminate waste and duplication.

I will work with Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Price to move rapidly in coming weeks and months to complete the fiscal year 2018 Appropriations bills.

Again, today's hearing is a part of the process we follow to determine the best use of taxpayer's dollars. After all, the "power of the purse" lies in this building - it is the Constitutional duty of Congress to make spending decisions on behalf of the people we represent at home.

HUD provides critical federal resources to some of most vulnerable populations in our country in need of housing, including seniors, homeless veterans, and those with disabilities.

I'm sure you can agree it is completely unacceptable that even one veteran in this country should be reduced to homelessness as they struggle with PTSD, drug and alcohol abuse, and other issues as they transition to civilian life. As you may not know, I have personally worked to establish, in 2013, the Valley Brook Village at the Lyons VA facility in New Jersey which provides 62 affordable housing units to homeless and at-risk vets. Of these 62 units, 50 are supported by HUD VASH vouchers.

We must ensure that the Department, in conjunction with the VA, continues this critical program so that we can eliminate homelessness among veterans.

Furthermore, throughout my time in Congress, I have constantly worked to ensure those with disabilities have access to quality, affordable housing resources. Housing resources are invaluable to those with disabled family members, as much of their household income is already spent on treatment and rehabilitation. The importance of providing housing assistance for those with disabilities cannot be understated and I will continue to advocate on behalf of New Jersey families I have met with currently served by these vouchers.

The FY2018 budget proposal calls for cutting Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Section 811) by 18%. I am curious to understand how the Department proposes to serve these families given this drastic cut.

I am very concerned about the proposed cut of \$1 billion to Section 8 tenant based rental assistance and would like to know how the Department plans to honor all existing vouchers with such a cut.

While I support the efforts to eliminate waste at the Department, I am also concerned that Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), a program with bi-partisan support that has been integral for community development since the days of President Nixon, is proposed for elimination.

In conclusion, I welcome Secretary Carson. I look forward to hearing from you and working with you in the months ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

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