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March 11, 2016

The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt
Chairman
Agriculture Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
235 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member
Agriculture Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations
1126 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr:

As you begin the FY2017 Appropriations process, the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) requests report language to support families' housing options in rural communities. The Rural Housing Service (RHS) is a critical program for the 20 percent of the U.S. population that live in rural areas and small towns. Finding safe affordable housing remains a challenge in these areas where rental housing is often limited and access to mortgage financing is challenging.

The Rural Housing Service is in the process of rewriting the definition of "rural" used to determine eligibility for RHS services. Many rural areas are homes to prisons and universities. Given their transient nature, these populations should not be counted as active members of the community for RHS eligibility purposes. NAR is requesting report language that would direct the RHS to consider the impact of prison and university populations on their eligibility criteria and determinations. Representative Andy Harris (R-MD) has offered this language, which was also included in the FY2016 Appropriations bill.

The more than 1.1 million members of the National Association of REALTORS® urge your support for this provision. Rural families face unique challenges in accessing mortgage credit. Rural areas and towns should not be ineligible for RHS services, simply due to institutions that happened to be located in their communities.

Sincerely,



Tom Salomone
2016 President, National Association of REALTORS®

cc: Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related
Agencies Subcommittee

