

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