

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2025

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th St SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Turner:

We write to express deep concern regarding your recent actions and reported plans for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the effect of your actions on the Department's ability to fulfill its statutory obligation to enforce our nation's fair housing and civil rights laws. It has been widely reported that HUD plans to terminate half of all staff, including 77% of staff within the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO).¹ It is our understanding that in addition to cancelling at least half of all fair housing grant agreements, at least 780 HUD employees have been terminated across the country to date.² These potentially illegal terminations³ appear to be a direct result of executive orders from the Trump administration that instruct the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Attorney General, and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to dismantle Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) and environmental justice offices, eliminate equity-related federal grants and contracts, and reduce the federal workforce. These actions pose a direct threat to HUD's ability to fulfill its legally mandated obligations under hard-fought federal civil rights and fair housing laws. This is not hyperbole. During President Trump's first administration, HUD told Congress that a 32% reduction in FHEO staff over nine years had "resulted in significant risks" to its ability to carry out its obligations under the law.⁴ Now, you reportedly plan to take fair housing staffing down to less than one third of what it was when the Trump Administration previously identified low staffing as an impediment to its ability to carry out the law. Indeed, it is our understanding that FHEO has sent communications stating that due to a 22% loss of staff, with more terminations forthcoming, FHEO will no longer accept housing discrimination complaints by email, mail, fax, over the phone, or in person (via walk-in) as part of regular complaint intake procedures.

Housing discrimination is illegal in the United States and violators may be subject to criminal penalties under the law.⁵ FHEO plays a critical role in implementing and enforcing the Fair Housing Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972.⁶ These statutes were enacted by Congress to prohibit discrimination in housing and federally funded programs based on race, color, national origin, disability, sex, familial status, religion, and other protected characteristics. You previously voiced your commitment to upholding the Fair Housing Act during your Senate confirmation hearing, yet your actions in your first month on the job have directly contradicted that statement.

¹ AP News, [Trump administration looks to slash HUD workers tackling the housing crisis](#) (Feb. 21, 2025).

² ABC News, [Trump administration to slash funding for enforcement of fair housing laws](#) (Feb. 28, 2024); See also Newsweek, [Layoff Tracker: List of Federal Agencies Hit With DOGE Layoffs](#) (Feb. 28, 2025).

³ NPR, [Judge says Trump's mass firing of federal employees is illegal and should be stopped](#) (Mar. 1, 2025).

⁴ HUD, [FY 2021 Congressional Justification, Program Offices Salaries and Expenses, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity](#) (2020).

⁵ Congressional Research Service (CRS), [The Fair Housing Act \(FHA\): A Legal Overview](#) (Jun. 27, 2024).

⁶ HUD, [About FHEO](#) (accessed on Mar. 3, 2025).

So far, you have repealed the agency's Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Rule, halted enforcement of the Equal Access Rule, and stated that "DEI is dead at HUD."⁷ You are also reported to have allowed individuals from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to access "some of the most critical and sensitive systems inside HUD," which apparently includes access to HUD data systems that include personally identifiable information, reports of discrimination, and the non-public locations of people who have experienced domestic violence and are at particular risk.⁸ This isn't just objectionable—it is irresponsible and puts people's lives at risk.

Let us be very clear, your enforcement of fair housing and civil rights laws and implementing regulations is not discretionary—it is a legal obligation.

It is essential to recognize that executive orders, while directive in nature, cannot override or amend statutes duly enacted by Congress.⁹ Any executive action that results in the wholesale dismantling of FHEO, or any similar civil rights enforcement office, will invite significant legal challenges.¹⁰ Such actions would severely impede HUD's statutory duties to:

- Provide fair housing throughout the United States;
- Investigate fair housing complaints;
- Conduct compliance reviews;
- Ensure civil rights protections in federal programs and among federal grantees; and
- Manage fair housing grant programs, including the Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) and the Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP).

In light of the recent reductions in personnel at HUD and the possibility of additional reductions, we have serious concerns and questions regarding HUD's ability to meet its statutory requirements and maintain compliance with relevant federal civil rights and fair housing laws. Furthermore, any abdication by HUD of its legal obligations threatens to embolden housing discrimination at a time when racial and economic disparities in housing access remain persistent and systemic.

Given the gravity of this issue, we ask that you respond to the following information request in writing as well as provide an in-person briefing no later than March 27, 2025. In responding to each item below, please cite HUD's legal authority for each action. Please provide:

1. Current staffing levels within FHEO, including any staff reductions or reallocations that have taken place since January 19, 2025;
2. Any planned layoffs or restructuring efforts and how those layoffs or restructuring would impact HUD and FHEO's capacity to effectively carry out its statutory mission, including but not limited to enforcement of relevant laws under its jurisdiction;
3. The current number and status of pending fair housing complaints, disaggregated by: the year the complaints were filed; the protected class, including sexual orientation and gender identity; and the type of housing transaction (i.e.: rental, homelessness, lending, appraisals and other real estate valuations, etc.);
4. The number of complaints that have been closed since January 20, 2025, including a detailed description of the following:

⁷ HUD, [ICYMI | Secretary Scott Turner on Fox & Friends - "DEI is dead at HUD."](#) (accessed on Feb. 25, 2025).

⁸ Wired, [DOGE Staff at HUD Are From an AI Real Estate Firm and a Mobile Home Operator](#) (Feb. 26, 2025).

⁹ CRS, [Executive Orders and Presidential Transitions](#) (Jul. 30, 2024); See also Congressman Frank Lucas (R-OK), [Executive Orders Cant Change Statutory Law](#) (Mar. 24, 2010).

¹⁰ 42 U.S. Code § 3608(b); Note: The Fair Housing Act establishes an Assistance Secretary of fair housing under HUD; See also CRS, [The Fair Housing Act: HUD Oversight, Programs, and Activities](#) (Jun. 15, 2018).

- a. the protected class, including sexual orientation and gender identity;
 - b. resolutions and remedies provided for each complaint; and
 - c. the reason for administrative closures of any complaints;
- 5. The following information about the DOGE activities at HUD and the individuals working for, or in conjunction with, DOGE at HUD:
 - a. A detailed list of all fair housing information, including complaint data, that each individual working for, or in conjunction with, DOGE has or had access to;
 - b. A detailed list of all systems containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII), including but not limited to systems that include protected information about victims of domestic violence, that each individual working for, or in conjunction with, DOGE has or had access to;
 - c. The following information about each individual working for, or in conjunction with, DOGE has or had access to the information described in Items a. and b. above:
 - i. the name, age, all professional/background experience, and date of employment for the position that person currently holds;
 - ii. the details (including but not limited to the issuance date) of any clearance or authorization that the individual has to access information, data or computer systems that contain data that are responsive to Items (a.) and (b.) above;
 - iii. the level, type and/or nature of government information that the clearance or authorization permits the individual to access – including but not limited to PII or classified (such as Separate Compartmentalized Information) information;
 - iv. the name and government affiliation of any entity and/or individual that was the source of that security clearance or access authorization;
 - v. whether the source of that clearance or authorization had the authority to grant such clearance or authorization;
 - vi. the background checks performed in advance of providing that clearance or authorization;
 - vii. the name and government affiliation of any individual and/or entity that performed the background checks;
 - viii. the date and time of every access or planned access;
 - ix. whether any of the access obtained or planned required or will require a clearance or authorization that had not been or will not be granted prior to the to the individual accessing that information; and
 - x. whether any individual removed or transferred any information or data responsive to Items a. and b. above into systems that were not the HUD system, including but not limited to personal storage systems and if so the name of any individual who authorized any such transfer;
- 6. A detailed list of contracts, agreements, or activities relating to fair housing that have been cancelled or are being considered for cancellation;
- 7. A copy of HUD's proposed Equal Access Rule that was submitted to OMB for review on February 12, 2025; and
- 8. A detailed plan outlining how HUD intends to continue enforcing fair housing laws.

We urge HUD to remain steadfast in its legal obligations under relevant federal fair housing and civil rights laws and to resist any unlawful directives that compromise such obligations. We expect full transparency

regarding these changes, and we will take all necessary oversight actions to ensure that HUD does not abdicate its responsibilities under the law.

Sincerely,



Maxine Waters
Ranking Member, Committee on
Financial Services



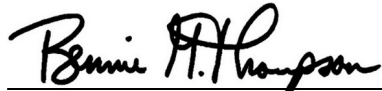
Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking, Housing,
and Urban Affairs



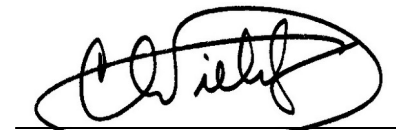
Rashida Tlaib
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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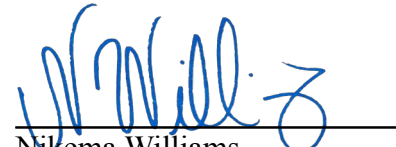
Bennie G. Thompson
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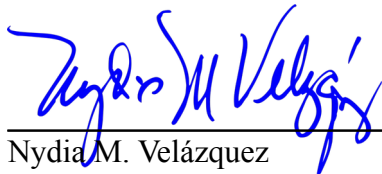
Cleo Fields
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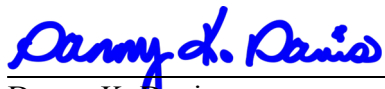
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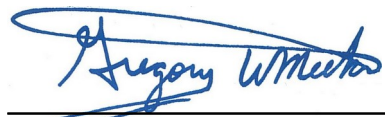
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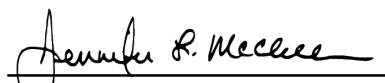
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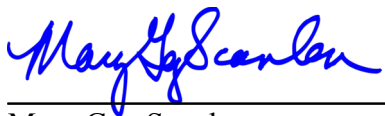
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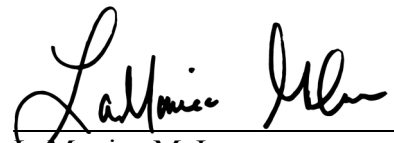
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LaMonica McIver
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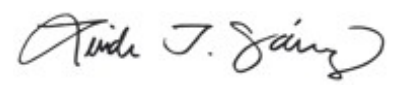
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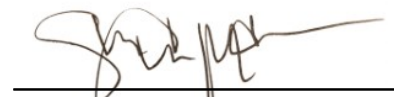
Joyce Beatty
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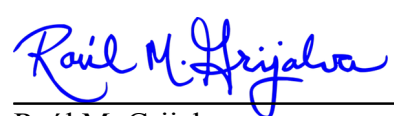
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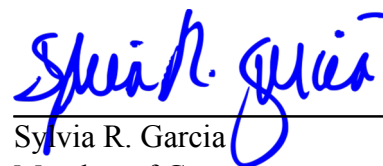
Nanette Diaz Barragán
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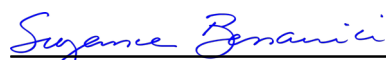
Dwight Evans
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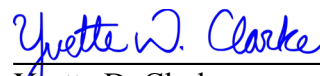
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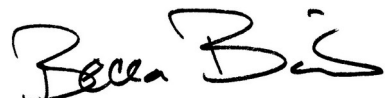
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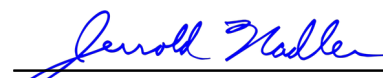
Brendan F. Boyle
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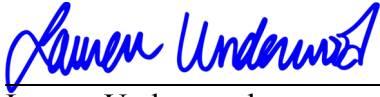
Paul D. Tonko
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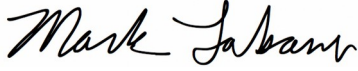
Jerrold Nadler
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Lauren Underwood
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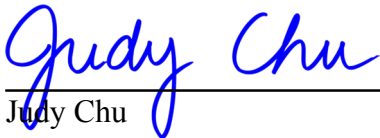
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Mark Takano
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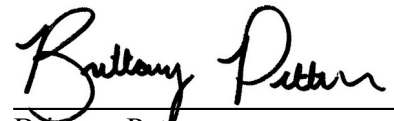
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, Transportation, Housing and
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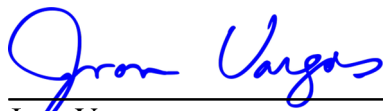
Sarah McBride
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J. Luis Correa
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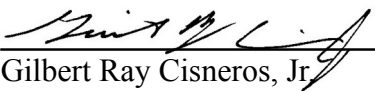
Raphael Warnock
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Juan Vargas
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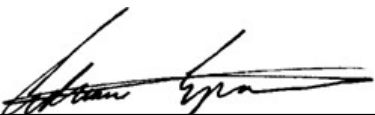
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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
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Summer L. Lee
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Adriano Espaillat
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
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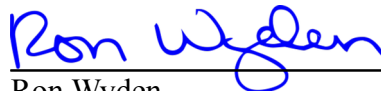
Diana DeGette
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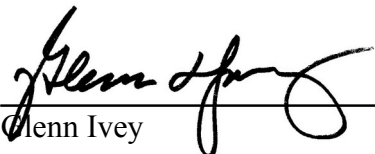
Darren Soto
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Madeleine Dean
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Ron Wyden
United States Senator



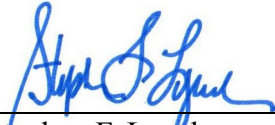
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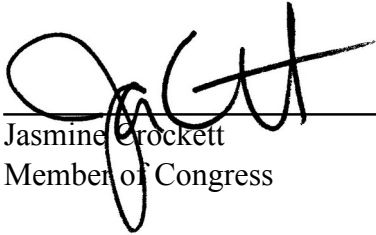
John Garamendi
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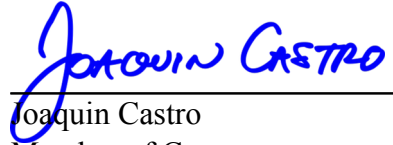
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
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Stephen F. Lynch
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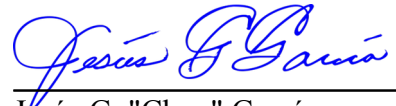
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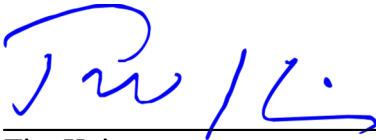
Joaquin Castro
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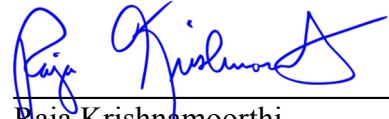
Maxwell Alejandro Frost
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



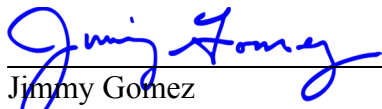
Greg Casar
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Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



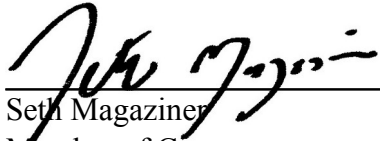
Deborah K. Ross
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Jimmy Gomez
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Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Seth Magaziner
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Sean Casten
Member of Congress



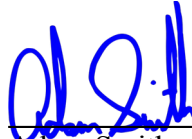
Doris Matsui
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Robert J. Menendez
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Yassamin Ansari
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Adam Smith
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Dan Goldman
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Tina Smith
United States Senator



Julia Brownley
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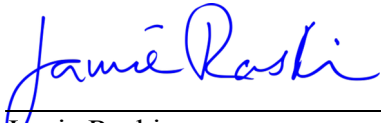
Ritchie Torres
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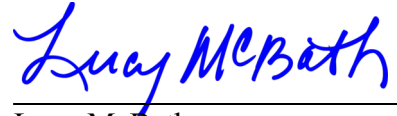
Greg Landsman
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Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



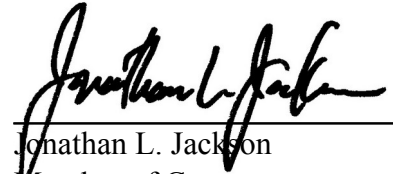
Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



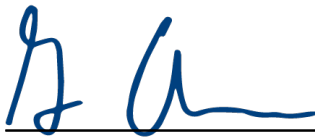
Lucy McBath
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David Scott
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Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



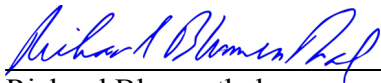
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



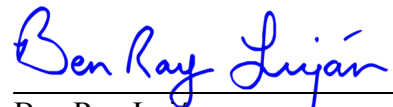
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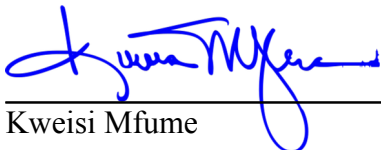
Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



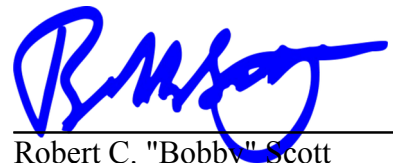
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



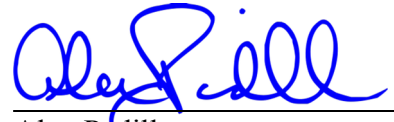
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