

ADAM SMITH

9TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

2264 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-8901

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
CHAIRMAN

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4709

DISTRICT OFFICE

15 SOUTH GRADY WAY, SUITE 101
RENTON, WA 98057
(425) 793-5180

TOLL FREE 1-888-SMITH09
<http://adamsmith.house.gov>
<http://twitter.com/RepAdamSmith>
<https://www.facebook.com/RepAdamSmith>

January 29, 2020

The Honorable Dr. Ben Carson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Carson:

We write concerning the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) process of allocating Section 811 Mainstream Housing Choice Vouchers (Mainstream Voucher Program) over the last two years.

The Mainstream Voucher Program provides critical housing support for individuals and families with disabilities. The Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in our districts rely on these funds to support families and individuals who are transitioning out of, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness or institutionalization. Washington state has the fifth highest rate of homelessness in the nation, due in major part to the high cost of rent¹ and these vouchers are a lifesaving homelessness prevention tool. However, our PHAs are hindered from fully serving these families and individuals due to HUD's current practice of issuing unpredictable and piecemeal Notices of Funding Availability (NOFAs). HUD's current process prevents our PHAs from adequately adjusting operations and staff in order to expediently lease awarded vouchers.

In Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18), HUD received \$505 million for the Mainstream Voucher Program—a \$385 million increase over FY17 for new vouchers. Despite this increase in funding, it is our understanding that HUD has not allocated additional vouchers in a timely fashion and has posted multiple NOFAs throughout the year. This piecemeal approach to issuing NOFAs is burdensome for PHAs, particularly smaller PHAs with limited resources. One alternative to multiple NOFAs suggested by local PHA staff is for HUD to issue one large NOFA with a process to release additional vouchers to awarded agencies in a staggered fashion as PHAs are successful in leasing them up.

In light of the above concerns expressed to us by local PHAs, we respectfully request your response to the following questions regarding HUD's future plans for issuing Mainstream Vouchers:

¹ WA Department of Commerce, "Homelessness in Washington State," (2018) <http://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/COMMERCE-Homelessness-2018.pdf>

- What is HUD's plan for issuing Mainstream Voucher Program NOFAs for the remaining funding appropriated through FY19? The next NOFA is scheduled for Spring 2020. Will this NOFA include all funds appropriated through 2019? If not, why?
- Why has HUD not issued NOFAs for the full amount of funding appropriated by Congress for FY18 and FY19 for the Mainstream Voucher Program? What is the purpose of issuing multiple NOFAs?
- Given that Congress approved \$229 million for the Mainstream Voucher Program for FY20, what is HUD's plan for expeditiously awarding these funds to PHAs?
- Has HUD considered awarding larger numbers of vouchers while phasing actual issuance dates to enable PHAs to be more strategic in ramping up operations? If not, why not?

People with disabilities and their families deserve the stability that Mainstream Vouchers provide. Efficient awarding of Mainstream Vouchers is crucial to ensuring that PHAs can most efficiently respond to the affordable housing needs of Washington communities. We appreciate your attention to this request and look forward to receiving your response.

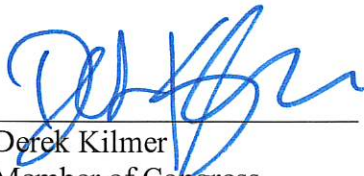
Sincerely,



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress



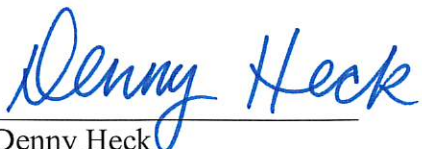
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Denny Heck
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