

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Rob Aderholt
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr:

As the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies considers the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Appropriations Bill, we write to respectfully request adequate funding for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing Programs.

Access to safe, decent, and affordable housing can transform lives. Yet, due to lower incomes and higher poverty rates, far too many rural families live in housing that is too expensive, in substandard condition, or both. According to U.S. Census data, approximately, 1.5 million rural homes—or about 5.9 percent—are in substandard condition. The poverty rate for rural areas, estimated at 18.1 percent according to the Economic Research Service, is both higher and more concentrated than the urban (15.1 percent) and national (15.5 percent) poverty rates. Overall, 82 percent of high-poverty counties—or 571 of the 703 counties with at least a 20 percent poverty rate—are rural. And, 86 percent of the nation’s “persistently poor” counties are rural, as well. Additionally, 30 percent of rural families (more than 8 million) spend more than 30 percent of their monthly gross income on housing. These households are considered “cost burdened,” and are likely to struggle to pay for other basic needs, such as health care and child care.

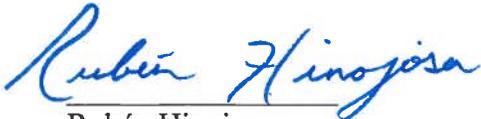
USDA Rural Housing homeownership and rental housing programs have a proven track record of overcoming these barriers to affordable housing in rural America. By providing low-cost loans, grants, and other related assistance, these key programs have not only helped millions of rural families improve their quality of life, but have created thousands of jobs in rural America.

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That's why we believe it is critically important that this Committee provide adequate funding for USDA's homeownership programs such as the Mutual and Self-Help Housing Technical Assistance program, which has helped over 50,000 families achieve homeownership through the sweat-equity model. We request that you restore the reductions to the Mutual Self-Help Program. Additionally, we urge you to support funding for the Section 502 Direct Loans, rental assistance, new multi-family construction and preservation, as well as farmworker housing, which all provide critical support to rural populations.

In recent years, this Administration has not paid sufficient attention to rural housing. Thanks to the consideration of the Appropriations Committee, these programs have received needed funding in the past. We encourage you to continue to support these programs in the FY17 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

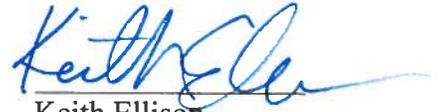
Sincerely,



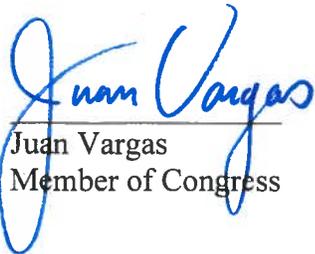
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Juan Vargas
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Suzan DelBene
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Jim Costa
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Ron Kind
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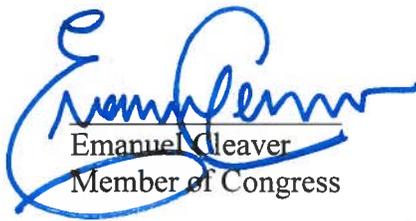
Paul Tonko
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Alma S. Adams
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Chris Gibson
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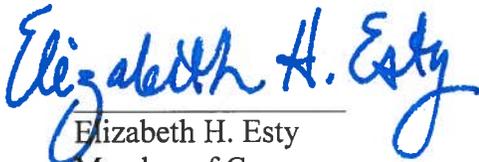
Emanuel Cleaver
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Earl Blumenauer
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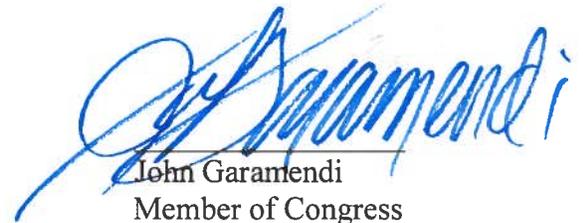
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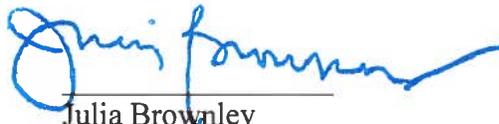


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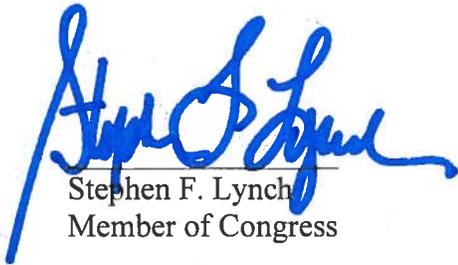
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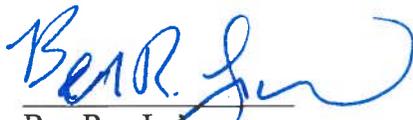
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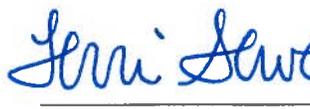

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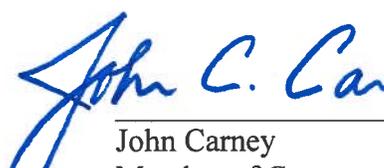

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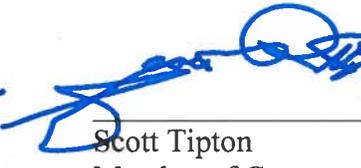

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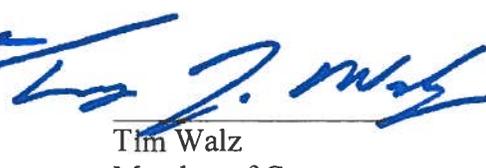

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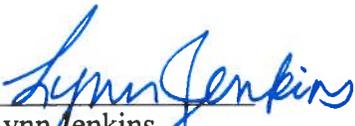

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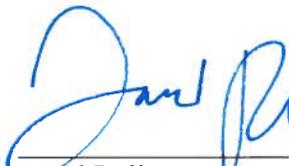

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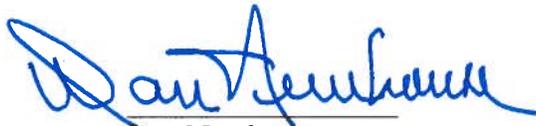

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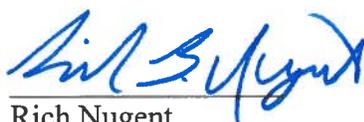

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Member of Congress


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Raul Ruiz
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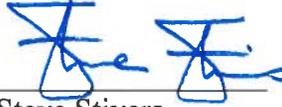

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