

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 15, 2023

Secretary Marcia L. Fudge
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th St., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Fudge:

We are writing to respectfully request that HUD authorize the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to access HOME-ARP funding in order to provide rental arrears assistance to NYCHA residents who have been put at risk of homelessness or otherwise rendered vulnerable by COVID-19.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) allocates \$5 billion for the HOME program in order to reduce homelessness and housing insecurity “by assisting individuals or households who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or otherwise vulnerable by providing housing, tenant-based rental assistance, supportive services, and temporary shelter.” NYCHA has tens of thousands of residents who have fallen behind on rent and who therefore require the “tenant-based rental assistance” that the HOME-ARP program expressly envisions for those “at risk of homelessness.”

Tenants who are “at risk of homelessness” or “otherwise vulnerable” should be eligible for funding under HOME-ARP, regardless of where those tenants reside, be it in public housing or private housing. The COVID shock to NYCHA has been so extreme that NYCHA tenants have accumulated half a billion dollars in rent arrears—a deeply destabilizing development for the country’s largest provider of affordable housing.

Despite the urgent and unmistakable need for federal assistance, HUD has been reluctant to grant NYCHA the approval it needs to access the HOME-ARP funds for NYC. Never mind that every housing policy maker in NYC—from the Mayor’s Office to the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development—has affirmed that tenant-based rental assistance for NYCHA tenants ought to be the highest priority for HOME-ARP funds in NYC. The will of NYC’s local government has fallen on deaf ears.

We have trouble understanding the reasons for HUD's reluctance. There is no language in HOME-ARP's underlying statute that justifies denying public housing tenants the same access to tenant-based rental assistance that has been made available to private housing tenants. As Members of Congress from New York City, which is home to the largest public housing portfolio in the country, we never voted and would never vote to enact a law that singles out public housing tenants for exclusion from tenant-based rental assistance. What we are seeking from HUD is not special treatment but equal treatment of public housing residents under the HOME-ARP program, which was designed to assist every type of tenant in need.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



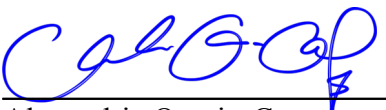
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