

Save Our Homes Coalition

c/o Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants
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Senator Scott Brown
2400 JFK Federal Building
Boston, MA. 02203

January 25, 2011

Dear Senator Brown:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing more than 250,000 low income Massachusetts families, elderly and disabled people in HUD Multifamily, Public and Voucher housing and community allies, we are writing to urge your support for full funding for vital HUD housing programs to Save Our Homes and communities.

We are aware that the new Republican House leadership has proposed up to \$100 billion in immediate cuts to discretionary federal spending, effective March 4, in the FY 2011 Appropriations process. If applied across the board to HUD programs, this would result in a loss of 25,000 Section 8 Vouchers, approximately 13,000 Project Based Section 8 subsidies, \$52 million in cuts to Public Housing and \$30 million to city housing programs in Massachusetts alone, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (report attached).

Our families and communities cannot sustain this loss. In fact, only one in four families eligible for low income housing assistance is able to obtain it, accounting to the growing crisis of family and elder homelessness in our state. In tandem with the unabated foreclosure crisis, cuts of this magnitude would literally make thousands more homeless in our state and push low income families already distressed by unemployment and stagnant or declining incomes beyond the breaking point.

If the Congress wishes to explore cuts to housing subsidies for deficit reduction, it can begin by reducing or phasing out the \$104 billion mortgage interest deduction subsidy, as recently recommended by the bi-partisan Deficit Reduction Commission. Eliminating the tax subsidy for second and vacation homes alone would generate immediate annual savings of \$2 billion. Replacing the mortgage deduction with a homeowner tax credit would leave \$75 billion in savings, enough to provide for new housing production and vouchers and to pay down the deficit, while reducing speculative pressures in housing markets, a prime cause of the nation's economic calamities.

We appreciate your support for the \$25 million amendment to the Senate Appropriations Bill last fall that would extend urgently needed Voucher protections to up to 80,000 at-risk families currently ineligible for this assistance in HUD multifamily "expiring mortgage" developments such as Georgetowne Homes. However, we regret that you joined your Senate Republican colleagues in blocking passage of the overall Appropriations bill, forcing consideration of the FY 11 budget, and this amendment, under less favorable circumstances.

Accordingly, we urge that you publically pledge to oppose cuts, and support full funding, for Section 8, Public Housing, Homelessness and other vital HUD programs. We also ask that you continue your support for Appropriations bill language extending Vouchers to "expiring mortgage" buildings and allowing their conversion to project-based subsidies. At our request, the Boston City Council is planning a public hearing on these issues for Monday, February 14. We are requesting federal elected officials to issue statements or submit testimony to this effect by that time.

Finally, we request a meeting with a representative delegation of the undersigned organizations prior to the February 14 hearing to discuss our concerns and answer any questions you may have. We will be in contact with your office to arrange the requested meeting.

Sincerely,
Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants
Mass Union of Public Housing Tenants
Committee for Boston Public Housing
City Life/Vida Urbana
Homes for Families
Boston Tenant Coalition
Chinese Progressive Association
Chelsea Collaborative
Boston Chinatown Resident Association
Dominican Women's Development Center
Union of Minority Neighborhoods
Massachusetts Jobs With Justice