



The Honorable Bill Frist
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Frist and Minority Leader Reid:

As leaders of two organizations that represent more than 225 million people living in 18,000 cities, towns and villages, and more than 21,000 housing and community development agencies and professionals, we are writing to urge you, as the leaders of Congress, to make affordable and attainable housing a priority for this country.

Over the past several years, our nation has witnessed an alarming increase in the number of families and individuals who simply cannot find a decent, affordable place to call home. Those in need of attainable housing are more economically diverse than ever, and now include a growing community of teachers, nurses, first responders, and others essential to our communities. Certainly the greatest need continues to be felt by those at the lower end of the economic ladder. One in eight Americans now have no choice but to pay 50 percent or more of their income for housing, and tens of thousands sit on long waiting lists for housing assistance.

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) and the National League of Cities (NLC) believe the federal government must play a central role in addressing this crisis. Essential to this role is the need for a strong commitment to an adequate and reliable level of funding, and programs which encourage local autonomy, local flexibility, and local decision-making.

Specifically, such a commitment would include:

- Developing a comprehensive, integrated approach to preservation of the existing affordable housing inventory;
- Encouraging production to increase the total number of affordable housing units available to meet local demand;
- Supporting and encouraging the growth and development of quality communities; and
- Reshaping the nature and extent of federal involvement in the development and provision of local housing and community development programs.

The federal government must also find ways to create incentives for local governments to successfully address local housing issues. Local entities have successfully addressed housing and community development needs through programs such as the Community Development Block Grant program, which empowers communities to create and retain jobs, and assist households at a low-to-moderate range of incomes.

NAHRO and NLC are greatly concerned that the proposed FY 2007 budget slashes CDBG funding by over \$1 billion, reducing support for this critical program back to 1990 levels. This devastating cut will inhibit progress in local communities. Also of concern is the elimination of the HOPE VI program, which has successfully mitigated the worst examples of public housing and replaced it with adequate, affordable, and attainable housing for a mix of incomes. Our nation's 75-year investment in the public housing program, which serves millions of people in need, faces a threat from reduced Capital and Operating funds. We must adequately fund public housing so as not to undermine that which we have worked so hard to create.

If we are to address the needs of working families and the viability of our communities and cities, a committed and invested federal partner is a necessity. NAHRO and NLC urge you, as leaders of the 109th Congress, to make production and preservation of affordable and attainable housing a high priority as you work through the year's legislative agenda.

We look forward to working closely with you to attain these goals. Our families are counting on you!

Sincerely,



JAMES C. HUNT
President
National League of Cities



DONALD J. CAMERON
President
National Association of House and
Redevelopment Officials

cc: The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader