

JARED POLIS
2ND DISTRICT, COLORADO



COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:
RANKING MEMBER
HEALTH, EMPLOYMENT, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS

HIGHER EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES

STEERING AND POLICY
PARLIAMENTARIAN

1433 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0602
(202) 225-2161
(202) 226-7840 (FAX)

website and email:
<http://polis.house.gov>

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

March 17, 2016

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Price:

As you consider various requests and develop the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill, I urge you to prioritize a variety of programs that will assist my constituents in the Second Congressional District of Colorado, as well as millions across the country in being able to afford a stable, acceptable home.

Safe, affordable housing is an essential foundation for families and communities, but the availability of housing options across the country is insufficient and unacceptable, often being far too expensive or in substandard conditions. In the state of Colorado, nearly 40 percent of renters paid more than 30 percent of their income on housing and almost one-fourth of all Colorado renters paid more than 50 percent of their income on housing, according to 2010 statistics. Affordable housing is defined as an individual or family paying no more than 30 percent of their incoming on housing (including utilities). Consequently, the people of Colorado, especially in the communities in the Second Congressional District of Colorado, are excessively burdened by the cost of rent and mortgages. Whether it is in downtown Boulder or Fort Collins or the Mountains of Summit County, CO affordable housing is one of the top concerns I hear about when I'm in the district.

The burden of excessive housing costs has a detrimental impact on all aspects of the lives of individuals and families, especially those who have children. Whether it is clamping down on economic growth, increasing pressure on infrastructure, reducing retirement savings, having a negative impact on health and education, forcing individuals to commute longer hours or children to keep changing schools, a lack of affordable or stable housing for my constituents, means they are suffering, many to the point of becoming homeless.

There are multiple programs that can help to address the affordable housing crisis occurring in the district I represent, and across the country. As you consider funding levels for the THUD Appropriations bill I ask that you provide robust funding for the following programs:

Self Help Ownership Program

The Self Help Ownership Program (SHOP) is the only HUD program that specifically supports low-income homeownership. This program provides funding for non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity International that utilize the "sweat-equity," model to cover land purchases and infrastructure costs to build housing for first-time homeowners. SHOP homebuyers must be low-income and contribute a significant amount of sweat equity hours, by helping to build their own homes, in the development of their SHOP-assisted homes. I encourage you to fund this program at or above the FY16 funding level.

Rural Housing Programs

Rural Housing programs offer low-cost loans, grants, and other assistance to improve housing conditions and quality of life in rural America. These are one of the rare lifelines to low-income, rural families having trouble affording homes. One example is the Direct Loan Program, which has helped more than 2.1 million families realize the American Dream and build their wealth by more than \$40 billion. It is the only federal homeownership program that exclusively targets low- and very-low income rural families. The program provides essential funding to fill in the gap in the private market, allowing families who would otherwise be unable to access affordable mortgage credit achieve homeownership. Another example is the Multi-Family Housing Rental Assistance Program provides subsidies to some tenants in Rural Development rural rental or off-farm labor housing complexes so that they do not pay more than 30 percent of their incomes for rent and utilities. I request you provide \$1,075,000 for these various rural housing programs.

Community Development Block Grants

This program which is continually praised by state and local officials, as well as housing advocates, provides flexibility, while helping improve housing opportunities for those in need. It has helped over 1.3 million low- and moderate-income persons through single-family, owner-occupied rehabilitation, homeownership assistance, energy-efficient improvements, and lead-based abatement, among other activities.

CDBG are successful because for every \$1.00 provided by CDBG, communities and non-profits leverage an additional \$3.65 in non-CDBG funding and creates hundreds of thousands of jobs in the process. The funds for this program are critical, and I request you provide robust funding for CDBG.

Home Investment Partnerships Program

The HOME program is extremely effective in meeting my state's housing challenges. The program helps the communities meet the needs of low-income families and individuals in need of supportive housing, including veterans, persons with disabilities, seniors and persons experiencing homelessness. States and local communities use HOME to fund new production where affordable housing is scarce, rehabilitation where housing quality is a challenge, rental assistance when affordable homes are available, and provide homeownership opportunities when those are most needed. The flexibility of this program means that states and communities can quickly react to changes in their local housing markets. Restoring HOME funding to \$1.2 billion is necessary at this critical time.

Continuum of Care Program & McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant Program

With the lack of affordable housing, many individuals and families in communities in Colorado are ending up homeless. For that reason I ask that you robustly fund the Continuum of Care Program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) which provide interventions like homelessness prevention and rapid re-Housing. Additionally, I ask that you provide robust funding for the HUD McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants programs and the full implementation of the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act.

The passage of the HEARTH Act seven years ago was a positive step in homeless assistance systems by restructuring the systems to better incorporate proven, efficient solutions, while putting a better emphasis on data and doing what we know works. The overarching goal of the homeless assistance system is to move families and individuals into permanent housing in the fastest and most cost-effective ways possible. Despite economic hardship over past years, decreases in family homelessness have been achieved, and homelessness among veterans and chronically homelessness individuals has fallen dramatically in recent years, demonstrating that these programs can get the job done when we invest in them.

I ask that you fund the Continuum of Care Program and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program at the president's requested level of \$2.664 billion.

I understand that there are a large number of items that you must consider, as you fund our infrastructure, community and housing programs for the FY17 fiscal year. However, I respectfully request that you prioritize funding all of the above affordable housing programs because our communities are reaching critical breaking point, and are requesting your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Polis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a long tail at the end.

Jared Polis
Member of Congress