



Maine Real Estate Managers Association

July 9, 2013

The Honorable Susan Collins
United States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

The Maine Real Estate Managers Association writes to you on behalf of our members, who manage over 25,000 units of affordable housing in Maine, of which at least 10,000 units are HUD financed or administered. Our membership also includes owners of HUD housing. We are very concerned about the fast-approaching closing of the Manchester, New Hampshire, HUD Field Office and the impact this will have on our residents and the operational health of our projects.

For many years, we have relied not only on the institutional memory of the HUD staff in Manchester about our housing projects but also their knowledge of the unique characteristics of rural housing. We regret to say that this understanding of rural housing is rare in HUD's large urban offices and will be difficult to replicate in the 10 consolidated offices HUD is proposing. Many of HUD's urban-centered regulations do not apply to the typical rural project without some adaptation. Maine's rural HUD projects are small (an average size of less than 20 units) and remotely located, far from the management company and with very limited funds for site staffing. In many areas of Maine the local HUD project is the ONLY rental housing in the area and "comparable unassisted housing" (referred to in HUD regulations) does not exist within a 100 miles.

We are deeply concerned that with the closing of the Manchester office, we will lose the opportunity for necessary, regular face-to-face communication that cannot be replaced by emails or phone calls. Currently, HUD staff regularly attends our quarterly meetings to provide regulatory updates and respond to questions about HUD program requirements. These regular in-person contacts have provided invaluable opportunities for property owners and managers to establish strong working relationships and have done much to enhance HUD's understanding of our concerns and our properties. At these times, HUD staff gives much needed technical assistance, particularly since small, remotely located owner/managers have few opportunities for training in HUD program requirements.

In conclusion, we do not believe that distant and, for the most part, urban-oriented staff will be able to provide the level of service and attention that the Manchester Field Office has given to Maine's properties in the past and that our residents and projects will suffer as a result.

Please help us by asking HUD to retain a core of multifamily housing staff in Manchester, New Hampshire. There would be some cost to this but in our opinion it would be a worthwhile investment in maintaining the viability of Maine's rural housing portfolio.

Sincerely,

Affordable Housing of Maine, Lewiston
Alpha Management Corp., Scarborough
ARCH Beta Apartments, Augusta
Auburn Housing Authority, Auburn
C&C Realty Management, Augusta
CEI, Wiscasset
Clark Young Associates, Houlton
Community Concepts, South Paris
Community Housing of Maine, Portland
Elderly Housing Development & Operations, Augusta
Emerald Management Corp., Westbrook
Federal Management Company, Portland
Gary Buck Property Management, Howland
Goodwill Industries of Northern New England, Portland
Housing Management Resources, Kittery, Augusta, Portland
Jim Otis, CPA
L&L Management, Greenville
LaBrecque Property Management, Sabattus
Maine Development Associates, Bangor
Methodist Conference Home, Inc., Rockland
Northern New England Housing Investment Fund, Portland
Otis Atwell, South Portland
Phoenix Management, Saco
PropSys, Lewiston
Realty Resources Management, Rockport
Seton Village, Inc., Waterville
Shalom House, Inc., Portland
SHP Management, Cumberland Foreside
Sterling Management, Sanford
Stewart Property Management, Augusta, Fryeburg, etc.
Strategic Energy Group, Portland
Sweetser, Saco
The Caleb Group, Lewiston, Bangor, Portland, etc.
The Housing Foundation, Orono
The Silver Street Group, Portland
TREMS, Inc., Patten
Waterville Housing Authority, Waterville
Westbrook Housing Authority, Westbrook
York Housing Authority, York

cc: Shaun Donovan, Secretary, Housing and Urban Development