

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2022

Chairman David E. Price
Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing,
And Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Mario Diaz-Balart
Subcommittee on Transportation, and Housing,
And Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

As the subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill, we urge you to include language in the report accompanying your bill that will help ensure that residents of Public Housing retain their right to have one or more household pet(s), and that this right is not undermined by conversion to privately managed units under the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program or unreasonable breed restrictions.

Congress created the RAD program through the 2012 Appropriations Act to convert Public Housing units to one of two types of long-term, Project-Based Section 8 rental assistance contracts. This program is intended to update and modernize the country's Public Housing stock and ensure that there are more units available to meet demand. In response to U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that 10,000 Public Housing units are lost each year due to underfunding and resulting deterioration and demolition of buildings, Congress approved an increased cap of 455,000 Public Housing units that could be converted under the RAD Program. Of those, 140,000 have been or are in the process of converting.

Existing law allows residents of Public Housing to maintain one or more household pet(s), subject to "reasonable requirements." However, the same protections do not exist under the HUD notice that governs the RAD program. As a result, existing income disparities in pet ownership could be greatly exacerbated through these conversions. Additionally, the current right for Public Housing residents to have pets is undermined by Public Housing Authority (PHA) policies prohibiting certain breeds or restricting pets based on size and weight.

Scientific evidence compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms that the human-animal bond provides tangible health benefits including a decrease in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels; decreased feelings of loneliness; and increased opportunities for exercise and socialization. Additionally, the CDC strongly recommends against breed-specific laws, noting that data collection related to bites by breed is fraught with potential sources of error. Therefore, as more units convert to privately managed units under the RAD program, it is important to ensure that residents of Public Housing maintain their right to have a pet.

To ensure that Public Housing residents can continue to maintain pets and that current unreasonable barriers to pet ownership are removed, we request that the subcommittee include the following report language in its bill:

"The Committee is concerned that the conversion of public housing properties managed by Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) through the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program may impact pet retention. Scientific evidence compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) confirms that the human-animal bond provides tangible health benefits: having a pet can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels; decrease feelings of loneliness; and increase opportunities for exercise and socialization. Currently, residents of Public Housing have the right to have one or more household pet, subject to reasonable restrictions. However, some RAD conversions may threaten the ability of public housing residents to retain this right. The Committee instructs the Department of Housing and Urban Development to ensure that residents of properties that convert from PHA management to the RAD program, as well as new residents of properties that have converted under the RAD program, be afforded the same right to maintain pets as under the Public Housing program. Furthermore, reasonable restrictions on permitted pets owned by residents of PHA or RAD units should not include prohibitions on specific breeds of animals, which can exacerbate housing insecurity for low-income families by forcing families to choose inferior housing situations in order to keep their pets."

Thank you for considering this request, which would help reduce income disparities in pet ownership and prevent loving families from having to relinquish their pets.

Sincerely,



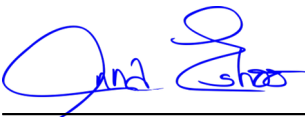
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Member of Congress



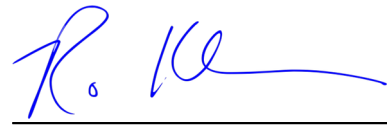
Brian K. Fitzpatrick
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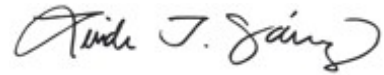
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Ann McLane Kuster
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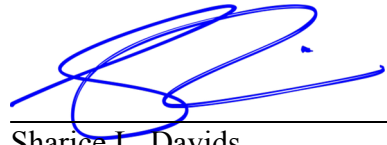
Carolyn B. Maloney
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Member of Congress



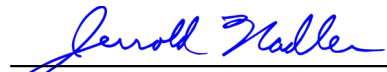
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Member of Congress



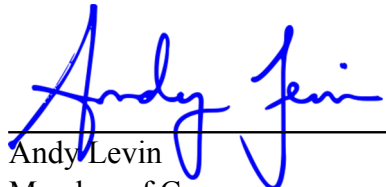
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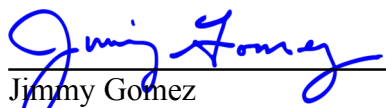
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