

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 21, 2022

Secretary Marcia L. Fudge  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 7th Street SW,  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Fudge:

We write to express our concerns regarding the charging of pet fees and deposits in Public Housing.<sup>1</sup> These fees and deposits, often disguised under misleading characterizations as “pet rent” or “pet security deposits”, subject tenants to initial payments and/or subsequent monthly charges and can add hundreds of dollars to already overwhelming monthly rental costs, inhibiting access to affordable housing for low-income communities across the country that rely on Public Housing.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly one in five households acquired a cat or dog since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, accounting for approximately 23 million American households based on the 2019 U.S. Census. 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. Lastly, more than 70% of residents in an inclusive housing survey said that pet-friendly housing is difficult to find, and 59% reported pet-friendly housing as too expensive.

Current guidance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development allows residents of Public Housing to maintain one or more household pet(s), subject to “reasonable requirements” established by local Public Housing Authorities. These requirements may include unlimited non-refundable pet fees and refundable pet deposits, which perpetuate socio-economic inequities and exacerbate housing insecurity for low-income families who understandably do not want to give up their beloved pets. As a result, families are forced to either surrender their pets to animal shelters, often at a cost to taxpayers, or choose inferior housing situations to keep them.

Under current HUD guidelines, certain HUD-assisted multifamily rental housing serving seniors and persons with disabilities may not collect pet deposits exceeding \$300. As part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s work to reduce barriers to safe and affordable housing for low-income individuals, **we urge you to issue guidance discouraging pet fees for all residents of Public Housing and limiting maximum pet deposits to \$300.**

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.

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the word “pet” here refers to “common household pets,” i.e., domesticated animals such as dogs, cats, and birds that are traditionally kept in the home for pleasure. Per HUD guidance, assistance animals - service animals or other animals that do work, perform tasks, provide assistance, and/or provide therapeutic emotional support for individuals with disabilities - are not pets. See U.S. Dep’t of Hous. & Urb. Dev., *Public Housing Occupancy Guidebook: Pet Ownership in Public Housing* (Dec. 2020), <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/PIH/documents/PHOGPetOwnership.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> This letter concerns pet fees, rents, and deposits charged for common household pets and not already subject to reasonable accommodation requirements. As HUD has made clear, people with disabilities with qualifying assistance animals may request a waiver of a pet fee or deposit for an assistance animal. See U.S. Dep’t of Hous. & Urb. Dev., *Assistance Animals*, [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/fair\\_housing\\_equal\\_opp/assistance\\_animals](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/assistance_animals).

Sincerely,



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Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



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Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



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Jason Crow  
Member of Congress



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Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



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Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

*André Carson*

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André Carson  
Member of Congress

*Yvette W. Clarke*

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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

*Suzanne Bonamici*

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Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

*Mark Pocan*

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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

*Jesús G. García*

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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

*Dwight Evans*

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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

*Donald M. Payne, Jr.*

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Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

*Carolyn B. Maloney*

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Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

*Rashida Tlaib*

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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

*Marie Newman*

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Marie Newman  
Member of Congress



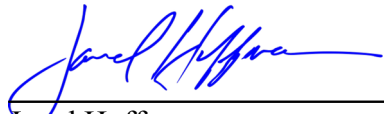
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Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



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Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress



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Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress