

Rep. Al Lawson (FL –5)
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD)
THUD Appropriations FY18
March 9, 2017 – Talking Points

- Thank you, Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Price for the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee. I'm Congressman Al Lawson and I represent Florida's 5th District, which includes Jacksonville, Florida.

- There are a number of critical programs that I would like to discuss given their importance to my district.

- First, I would like to see full funding for the Capital Investment Grants program, particularly for those projects that fall into the Small Starts category.

- As you know, this program is essential to building vital transit capital investment projects. These projects not only generate economic development but also help to reduce energy consumption.

- I know the subcommittee has been very supportive of this program and your work should be applauded for providing \$408 million in the FY 2017 THUD bill – more funding than the Senate provided.

- I would like to highlight one project from my district that is currently in the Small Starts pipeline for funding:

- The Jacksonville Transportation Authority has begun implementing a 57-mile Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network system, called the First Coast Flyer.
- It is made up of five distinct lines, two of which are already operating.
- In the FY17 bill, there is currently \$16.9 million pending for the *First Coast Flyer* East Corridor.
- I would like to see both projects funded - BRT is an important investment in Jacksonville's public transportation system.
- It has provided us with a viable option to develop safe, reliable premium service in a cost-effective manner.
- I would to like to see the Subcommittee continue to provide funding for the TIGER grant program and Bus Facilities.
- **Finally, I recently had the opportunity to visit the Eureka Gardens Apartments**, a privately owned HUD-subsided apartment community in Jacksonville.
- Like most Americans, the residents of Eureka Gardens want a clean, affordable, and safe place to raise their families and to call home. The conditions I saw there broke my heart. Sadly, under the previous management company, Eureka Gardens had fallen into a horrible state of disrepair where

residents had to combat black mold infestation, gas leaks, the loss of heat and hot water, no air conditioning, and a persistent crime problem.

- It is my firm belief that people who pay rent, regardless of their income, neighborhood, or whether they live in privately owned or public housing have the right to expect and get routine maintenance. And, that no one should be forced to live under conditions that threaten their health or safety.
- It is my hope that as the committee begins putting together its 2018 budget that it would consider adding additional funding for oversight, renovation and modernization of older public or private housing units. It is my hope that separate lines of funding could be made available for small, medium, and large communities.
- I would also ask the committee to consider providing low-interest loans for owners of subsidized housing units to make necessary repairs to their facilities.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to share with the subcommittee my thoughts on funding and thank you again for your ongoing support of these programs.

###