

TESTIMONY

CONGRESSMAN ADRIANO ESPAILLAT (NY-13)

House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies

April 18, 2018

Thank you, Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, and members of the esteemed committee. This subcommittee hearing and the decision that come out are very important to the constituents in New York's 13th Congressional District.

Rental Assistance Demonstration:

I am very appreciative of the Chairman and Ranking Member for their inclusion of Rental Assistance Demonstration ("RAD") language in the Fiscal Year 2018 omnibus legislation.

The Lakeview Apartments is one of East Harlem's last remaining Mitchell-Lama buildings. There is a dire need to maintain and secure affordable housing in this section of the city.

It has been a long-standing priority of mine and I thank the Chair and Ranking Member for their tireless effort and time working with me since I became a Member of Congress to ensure Lakeview's affordability by providing comparable market rent. The current area fair market rent cap is 120 percent and through the legislative language, Lakeview will be able to receive a significant increase in the cap to meet the gap in street rent to market rent, and keep rent affordable for its current tenants.

Public Housing Operating Fund:

New York City is home to the largest Public Housing Authority in North America, known as NYCHA. NYCHA is responsible for over 176,000 public housing apartments serving almost 400,000 authorized residents. NYCHA serves low-income tenants including recipients of the Housing Choice Voucher Program; Project Based Vouchers; and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing HUD programs. For NYCHA to effectively serve its tenants, it requires a commitment to robust funding from the Public Housing Operating Fund. For the day-to-day operations and long-term projects, rehabilitation, and modernization to take place and progress to be made, I urge this committee to increase funding and allocation of Public Housing Operating Funds to Public Housing Authorities.

I want to thank the committee for appropriating \$4.5 billion dollars in Fiscal Year 2018 to the Public Housing Operating Fund. I urge the committee to support the constructive progress being undertaken by public housing authorities and to increase this funding to \$5 billion dollars in Fiscal Year 2019.

Housing Choice Voucher Program, Section 8 Rental Assistance:

New York's 13th Congressional District, contains the greatest number of public housing units in the whole of New York City. This represents the second highest population density of public housing residents. Just over one-third of all renter households in New York's 13th Congressional District spend more than HALF of their income on housing and associated living utilities. Over 123,000 Section 8 Housing vouchers are dually administered by New York City's Housing Preservation and Development and New York City Housing Authority. The increase in additional

monies in the Fiscal Year 2018 Omnibus will better accommodate for the growing need of low-income tenants relying on Section 8 Housing.

Therefore, with a total of \$30.3 billion dollars allocated for Section 8 and Public and Native American Housing, I urge the committee to dedicate at least \$22.8 billion dollars to fully fund all existing vouchers for the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Section 8 Rental Assistance in Fiscal Year 2019.

Public Housing Capital Fund:

Public housing is and should be considered critical local, state, and national infrastructure. Year after year, more than 400, 000 New Yorkers have had their homes and lives subject to the tumult of short-term funding bills and has led to the underfunding of public housing operations and capital. The practical effect has placed the long-term viability of the units at risk and resulting in health impacts for residents, including asthma and respiratory illness, which are major public health concerns for public housing residents throughout the nation.

HUD's most recent Capital Needs Assessment showed a deficit of \$26 billion dollars in capital repair needs throughout the whole country and NYCHAs own assessment stands at roughly \$17 billion dollars. Increased funding and investment in the Public Housing Capital Fund is of critical importance in the immediate and long-term remediation of dangerous mold and allergens, remaining lead paint and plumbing, and physical repairs of roofing, ventilation, and heat and water piping. These are issues that have been compounded over years of underfunding and uncertainty in the Federal budgeting process that has left states, cities, and localities in limbo. It is time to take the lead in rebuilding our national infrastructure and that includes public housing.

I want to thank the committee for rejecting the White House's proposal to cut funding to a zero level and urge the Committee increase Public Housing Capital Funding to a level of at least \$5 billion dollars in Fiscal Year 2019 to restart and re-affirm our commitment to rebuilding our public housing and national infrastructure.

Community Development Block Grants:

In this past calendar year and even now, the utility and flexibility of Community Development Block Grants cannot be underscored. In New York City alone Community Development Block Grant money has been used to repair over 19,000 households of multi-family buildings. Investing in single-family, multi-family, and NYCHAs Rehab and Resilience program has yielded dividends in in surplus of the investment. The additional benefit of deploying Community Development Block Grants funds to aid in natural disaster and other recovery efforts has been seen with the ongoing Hurricane Sandy recovery and habilitation efforts. These efforts and almost immediate ability to divert funds to address immediate needs cannot be understated.

I want to thank the committee for allocating \$3.3 billion dollars in Fiscal Year 2018 and urge to committee to fund this vitally important at the maximum amount possible in Fiscal Year 2019.

Bollards:

As we have seen in events domestic and abroad, pedestrian safety is a paramount concern for my constituents and New York City. One tool that has shown success and widespread support in adoption is the construction of bollards. These are raised concrete or metal posts on a sidewalk adjacent to a roadway with a design goal of slowing or stopping a motor vehicle. Along with my

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colleague Congressman Donovan of New York, we introduced the bipartisan Stopping Threats on Pedestrians (STOP) Act; that with the support of the Department of Transportation will begin greater construction of these reasonable and effective pedestrian safety tools.

I urge the committee to fully support pedestrian safety initiatives including, but not limited to bollards and other measures to better guarantee citizen safety.

Conclusion:

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price; Thank you so much for the opportunity to offer my concerns and priorities to the Committee. On behalf of my constituents in New York's 13th Congressional District, we appreciate your thoughtfulness and consideration of these concerns and priorities.