

# Testimony for Rep. Kihuen (NV-04)

Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, and my colleagues on the Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to come before the subcommittee to discuss the importance of transportation infrastructure, especially the Interstate 11 project, as well as the need for affordable housing in Southern Nevada.

Mr. Chairman, our nation's infrastructure is crumbling, with the American Society of Civil Engineer's giving the United States a D+. This is unacceptable. To fix this, we need to invest in our nation and rebuild our roads, bridges, tunnels, ports, and airways.

One such project underway is I-11, which is an interstate highway that will eventually span from Arizona's border with Mexico to Montana's border with Canada. This project will link Las Vegas and Phoenix, which are the only two adjacent cities in the nation with populations of more than one million people that are not currently linked by an interstate. Once completed, this project will mark the first new infrastructure addition to the 47,856-mile Interstate Highway System since it was deemed complete in 1992.

Not only will I-11 serve as an important link between major metropolitan areas in the Southwest, it will also serve as a vital link for rural communities in Nevada's Fourth Congressional District. It is critical that the I-11 corridor does not bypass towns in rural Nevada, including Mina, Luning, Hawthorne, Walker Lake, Schurz, and Yerington which would cost these communities the economic boost that would come with the development of I-11. In particular, I-11 is vital for the Hawthorne Army Depot in order to meet personnel demands and ensure our national security.

I-11 is the type of infrastructure project our country needs. It will not only improve our nation's crumbling infrastructure and create jobs, but will also make possible a key international trading route that will improve tourism, mobility and economic growth. I-11 is critical for the State of Nevada and I ask that this subcommittee make this major infrastructure project a reality and reject any proposals to toll our nation's highways and bridges.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to the I-11 project, I strongly urge this committee to continue funding the TIGER grant program. TIGER grants are a valuable funding tool for state and local governments and have provided millions of dollars to the State of Nevada over the years. These grants have been essential in maintaining our existing infrastructure and providing for future needs.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to transportation, one of the most critical issues facing my constituents in the State of Nevada is access to affordable housing and neighborhood stabilization. As many

of you know, Nevada was the hardest hit state in the country during the housing crisis. While the State of Nevada is in a much better place than it was during the recession, the pain from the housing crisis continues to this day. As my constituents know, Nevada led the nation in foreclosures for more than five years during the recession. In 2010, Nevada's mortgage delinquency rate peaked at 10.7 percent—one of the highest in the country. Only last year did this rate come down to the national average of just 1 percent.

As homes were being foreclosed upon and families were forced out of their homes, many Nevadans were pushed into the rental market. Due to a drastic slowdown in new home construction, more Nevadans were competing for fewer units. In fact, only 10 affordable housing units in Las Vegas are on the market for every 100 low-income people seeking a rental. At the same time, HUD rental assistance decreased, giving a one-two punch to Nevada families.

The HUD Housing Choice Vouchers play an integral role in helping low-income families, the elderly and people with disabilities afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. Many of my constituents rely on this program and I urge the committee to fully fund Housing Choice Vouchers.

Another important program to ensure strong, sustainable and inclusive communities is through the Community Development Block Grant Program, which provides communities with the resources it needs to address community development needs. Even though this program has been highly effective in seeking to ensure decent affordable housing, the Trump Administration has proposed eliminating the CDBG program. For Nevada, this would mean a loss of nearly \$20 million in funding. That is why I am asking the committee to fully fund the CDBG program so that state and local jurisdictions in Nevada and across our nation can thrive.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to discuss the importance of the Native American Housing Block Grant program, which is critical for those living in Indian Country.

Native Americans are twice as likely to live in poverty compared to the rest of our country, with homes that are overcrowded and in need of repairs. To address these housing needs, the Native American Housing Block Grant program can be used for housing development and assistance. We owe it to our nation's tribes to provide them with affordable and decent housing, which is why I urge the committee to fully fund the Native American Housing Block Grant program.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of this committee, as you can see, Nevada has many housing and transportation needs that fall under this committee's jurisdiction. That is why I am asking you to continue to fund these vital programs that invest in and improve our infrastructure and help working families across the Fourth Congressional District. Thank you for letting me testify before this committee to ensure that the needs of Nevadans are represented.

