Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2014

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan:

We support the proposed new Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on July 19, 2013 [*Docket No. FR-5173-P-01*]. Our support is based on our shared interest in advancing opportunity in America by shaping investments in housing, transportation, infrastructure, and economic development. We urge you to move swiftly to enact a final rule, and to ensure that HUD has the tools in place to support its successful implementation.

HUD's proposed rule moves towards real solutions by clarifying that jurisdictions that receive federal housing and community development funds must take steps to expand housing options for all households in opportunity-rich communities, reduce segregation and concentrated poverty, and must also invest in high-poverty communities in order to expand opportunity for existing residents. The rule greatly improves the process by which local jurisdictions ensure that HUD funds are being used to further fair housing by aligning it with the Consolidated Plans for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME and other HUD funding and with Public Housing plans and programs. At the same time, the proposed rule helps jurisdictions identify fair housing problems by providing data and analytical tools. The new tools reduce the burden on jurisdictions and allow for a consistent approach to analysis of local and regional conditions but also permit jurisdictions to identify priorities and strategies that make sense for them.

As you work to finalize the rule, it is particularly important to emphasize a point that you have articulated publicly; Jurisdictions must balance promoting new affordable housing in areas of high opportunity with investing resources to revitalize distressed areas. At the same time, they must try to avoid involuntary displacement as new investments are made in transportation, jobs and schools.

Successful implementation of the rule depends on establishing benchmarks against which to measure jurisdictions' progress toward addressing the priorities they identify. This component's

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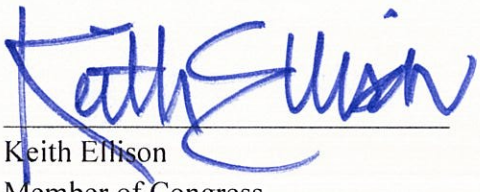
absence from the current fair housing planning process has undermined the impact of that process. In addition, we urge you to clarify the consequences jurisdictions will face if they fail to fulfill their obligation to further fair housing, as well as the process by which the public can voice its concerns about local fair housing efforts. This will clarify HUD's expectations and set a framework for accountability.

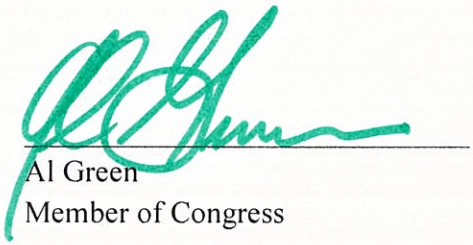
Zip code is a major factor in determining the type of education, jobs, health and other quality of life outcomes that people in this country experience. For too long and for too many people, housing options have been limited because of race, gender, religion, national origin, family status or disability. Unequal access to vital community resources results in unequal access to opportunity, and undermines our prosperity and success as a nation. Segregation and racially concentrated poverty conflicts with long-established public policy intent as well as our shared national value of access to opportunity.

Thank you for your leadership in expanding communities of opportunity and reducing racial segregation. We urge you to move forward expeditiously with a final AFFH rule that will help all our communities make progress toward the goals of achieving housing opportunity, overcoming historic patterns of racial and other segregation, and improving coordinated public investment in areas of highly concentrated poverty. We stand ready to help.

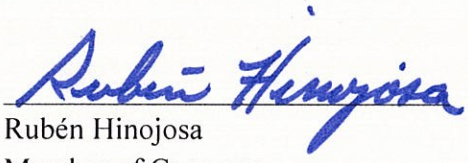
Sincerely,



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress

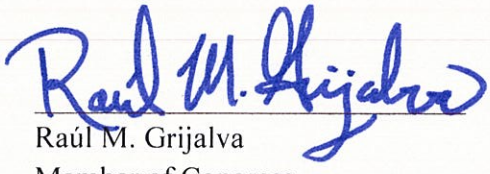


Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress

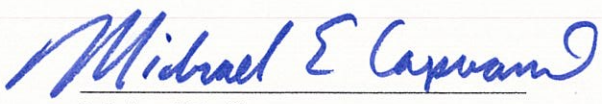
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Terri Sewell
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Michael E. Capuano
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Denny Heck
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André Carson
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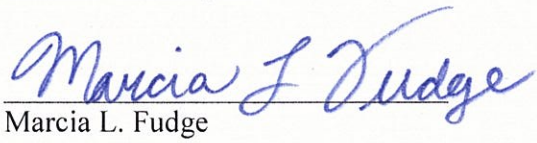
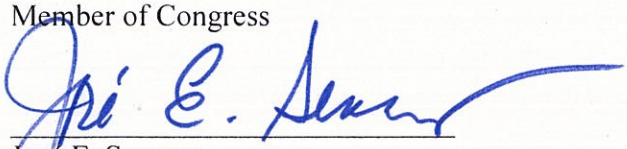
Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



José E. Serrano
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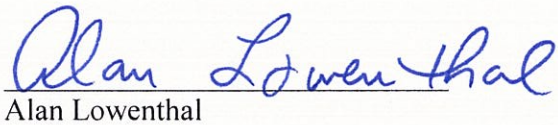
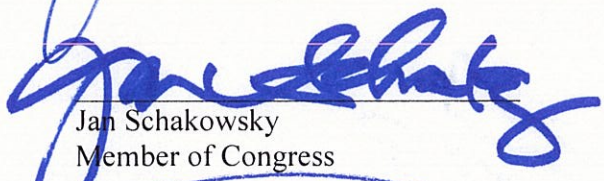
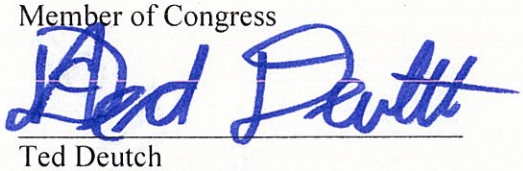


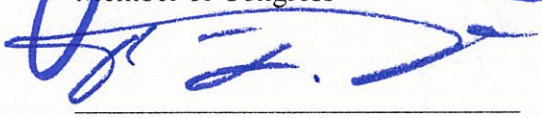
Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress



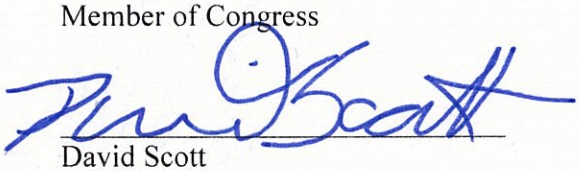
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



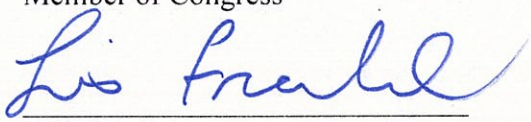
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



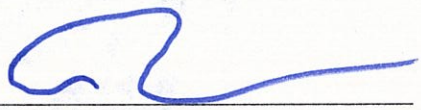
Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress



David Scott
Member of Congress

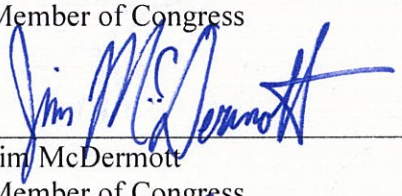


Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

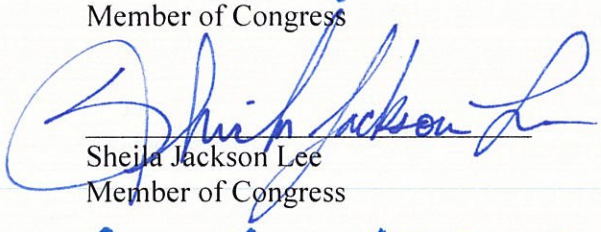


John K. Delaney
Member of Congress

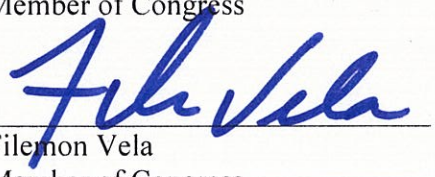
Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



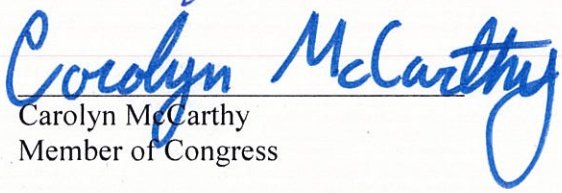
Jim McDermott
Member of Congress



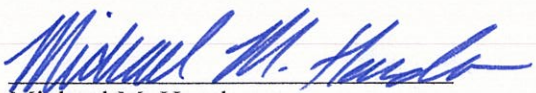
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

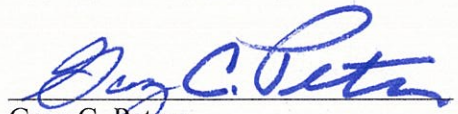


Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress

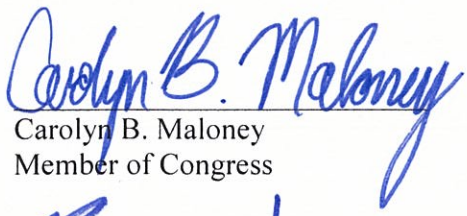


Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress

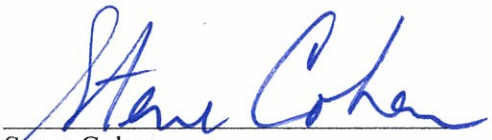
Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress



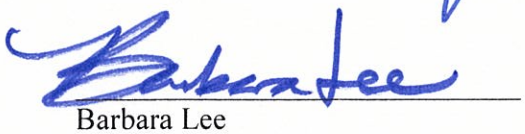
Gary C. Peters
Member of Congress



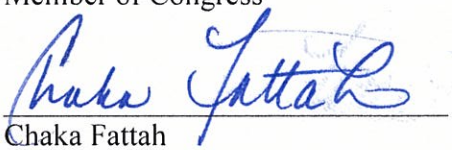
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

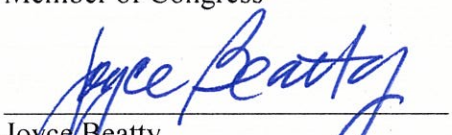


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress

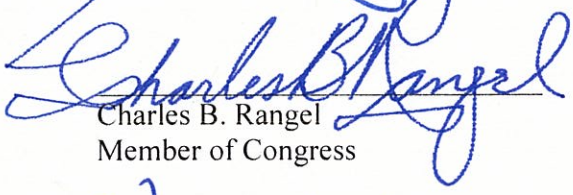
Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

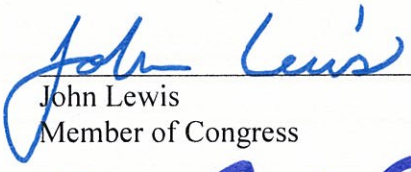
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



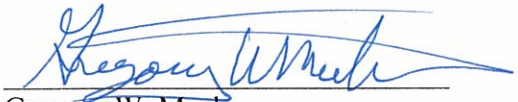
Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

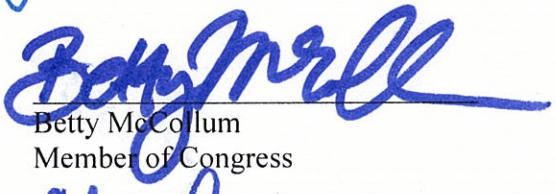
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson Jr.
Member of Congress



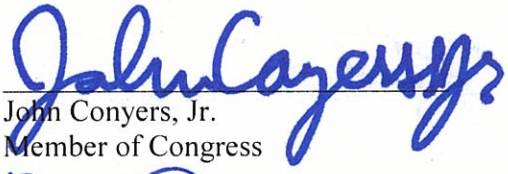
John Lewis
Member of Congress



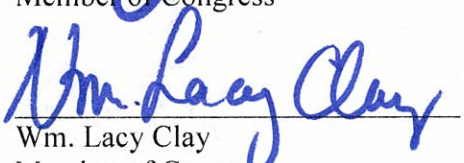
Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



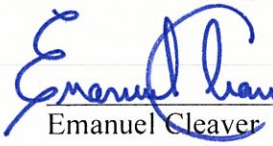
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



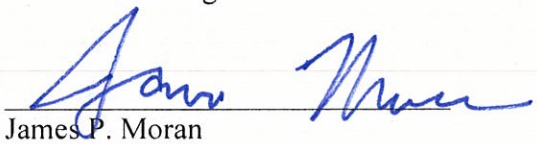
John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress



Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



James P. Moran
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
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