



Alexander Roberts  
Executive Director

Thursday, March 16, 2017

Dear Dr. Carson:

I am writing to apprise you of a policy you inherited from the previous administration that violates everything you stand for as expressed by Hippocrates, "First, do no harm."

I am executive director and co-founder of the largest nonprofit provider of emergency housing outside New York City. Each night Community Housing Innovations creates a safe, nurturing environment for one thousand people experiencing the trauma of homelessness in Westchester, Nassau, Suffolk, Dutchess and Orange Counties. They are primarily families with children.

For 20 years, our agency has pioneered HUD-funded supportive housing programs that place families and individuals with special needs into permanent apartments—the mentally ill, victims of domestic violence, the developmentally disabled, and those in recovery from addiction.

In an otherwise laudable effort to promote funding for programs that serve the chronically homeless living for over a year in the streets, HUD encouraged local groups that allocate federal funding to prioritize them over other homeless populations. With limited funding, this has resulted in the withdrawal of subsidies to thousands of formerly homeless tenants nationwide, many of whom have lived in subsidized apartments for years. Today, with few alternatives, a majority face eviction and renewed homelessness.

Because of the new priorities, a South Shore Association for Independent Living program ranked number one in the previous year was defunded. That program includes severely mentally ill individuals under court supervision.

In the case of our agency, two subsidies helping 26 single individuals and seven families that had been renewed each year for more than a decade lost funding. Families like the Ventresca's on Long Island, who have lived in their home since 2008, face eviction, homelessness and the potential break up of their family. Paula Ventresca, who suffered from depression and heroin addiction for many years, was able to turn her life around with the case management and stability offered by supportive housing. She has remained clean for over eight years, works full time as an administrative assistant, and has fashioned a new life for herself and her children. On Long Island, where the fair market rent for a three bedroom house is over \$2,400 per month, a HUD subsidy enables her to pay \$681, 30% of her income.



**Community Housing  
Innovations**

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While we understand the desire to get resistant homeless people living on the streets into apartments, and support that goal, it cannot be accomplished by making vulnerable tenants now in supportive housing homeless again.

Nassau County Social Services Commissioner John Imhof, whose shelter system will likely inherit many of these families and individuals, joins me in asking HUD to reconsider. Dr. Imhof says HUD should not engage in the “Sophie’s Choice” of putting one group of homeless over another.

In the absence of adequate funding, we appeal to you and President Trump to issue an order requiring that existing supportive housing programs remain funded until all tenants are relocated to permanent affordable housing. No one—especially families with children-- should be forced to lose their home twice.

Sincerely,

Alexander H. Roberts  
Executive Director