

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-5401**

July 2, 2013

The Honorable Shaun Donovan  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 7<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan:

I write to respectfully request your immediate reconsideration of the decision to close the Multifamily Housing Programs field office in Puerto Rico and to relocate its functions to an office in Atlanta, Georgia, as part of the Department's nationwide multifamily transformation initiative. The preservation of this office in its current structure and location is essential for the continued efficient functioning of federal programs affecting my constituents and the housing marketplace on the Island. My constituents depend upon the in-person accessibility of the field office and its superior level of customer service, which is tailored to Puerto Rico's unique characteristics. Closure or downsizing of this office stands to break the important confidence that stakeholders in Puerto Rico have in the Department because of the excellent, in-person customer service provided by its field office. Therefore, I am concerned that any disruption to the familiarity and personal access that surrounds this office would bring about unnecessary challenges and strain for my constituents. It is for these reasons that I seek reversal of the closure decision and your commitment to maintain the field office and its staff in Puerto Rico for the foreseeable future. Below, I set forth several points for your consideration.

The Office of Multifamily Housing provides a range of services nationwide through its field offices, including mortgage insurance for Department-approved lenders to facilitate construction, rehabilitation and the purchasing and refinancing of multifamily housing projects, in addition to managing project-based rental assistance programs for low-income families, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Each of these programs is of paramount importance to my constituents, which benefit from them at higher rates as compared with other communities throughout the United States. For example, according to the latest housing authority profiles available on the Department's website, the field office in Puerto Rico oversees rental assistance for at least 55,000 low-rent units as compared with a lesser amount, 48,000, of such units in Georgia.

Transactions in Puerto Rico associated with these federal programs are predominantly conducted in Spanish and involve manual processes, like document notarization and the recording of deeds. Some of these unique characteristics trace their origins to Napoleonic law. All of these characteristics are recognized by the personnel that currently staff the Multifamily Housing Programs field office on the Island. Indeed, the field office is not only familiar with these unique ways of doing business which are not found, at least not to the same extent and in the same ways, in other communities within the United States but have adapted to them to ensure effective delivery of services and administration of programs in Puerto Rico. Therefore, removal of the personnel from Puerto Rico to a more centralized location in the U.S. mainland would aggravate, not improve, the situation—since the ability to help process documentation manually and conduct face-to-face business would be lost. These features are what make the current field office superior in its level of customer service.

Therefore, our community firmly believes that the current operational structure for administration of Multifamily Housing Programs in Puerto Rico is the most appropriate for delivery of services. This structure should not be compromised by the Department's restructuring plans. While I can appreciate the desire of the Administration to make adjustments in an effort to achieve efficiency and budget savings, the fact is that the current arrangement for Puerto Rico has the right people in the right place. Nationwide budget savings should not be pursued at the expense of the most vulnerable in Puerto Rico who qualify for assistance to secure decent housing, and for those investing in the marketplace in Puerto Rico to make such multifamily housing units available to those in need.

I thank you and the Department for its sensitivity to the unique characteristics of the housing marketplace and low-income population in Puerto Rico, and for your attention to my concerns and request regarding the impact of your multifamily transformation initiative for my constituents. I hope we can continue our excellent working relationship with the Multifamily Housing Programs field office in Puerto Rico and its staff for the years to come. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Pedro R. Pierluisi

Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Maurice Jones, Deputy Secretary and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Representative to the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico