

# City of Flagstaff Housing Authority 2013 Legislative Agenda

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The City of Flagstaff Housing Authority (CFHA) owns 265 units of Low Income Public Housing, administers 333 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, 25 VASH Vouchers, 12 McKinney-Vento Vouchers for the seriously mentally ill, and manages 80 units of affordable housing, for a total of 715 low income families served in Flagstaff, Arizona. The median income of our residents is \$11,049. Unfortunately, we have approximately 2,000 families on our waiting list; this represents a wait of three to five years. This wait is untenable for the vulnerable population that we serve. We need full funding of the programs we administer as well as additional funding to develop new affordable housing.

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### **Strengthen & Simplify the Section 8 Rental Assistance Program**

- **Fully fund Housing Assistance Payment contract renewals.** Adequate funding should be paired with a funding mechanism to move existing vouchers from areas of under-utilization to areas of high use. For example, a Housing Authority that under-uses its Voucher units should not be allowed to keep the chronically unused vouchers; these should be moved to an agency with a consistent use of over 98%.
- **Restore responsible funding levels for PHAs' ongoing administrative fees.** In FFY 2012, the funding level was at 80% pro ration, the lowest pro-ration in the 37-year history of the program.
- **Provide funding for new Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, to be distributed on a fair share basis.** In the past decade, most new Vouchers are limited to special needs areas, leaving the working poor underserved. We need to address this backlog of need through the funding of new general purpose vouchers.
- **Permanently enact sensible legislative reforms** for the Section 8 tenant-based program for more efficient use of program funds. The Affordable Housing and Self Sufficiency Act of 2012 (AHSSIA) is the current version of reform legislation focusing on the Section 8 tenant-based and project-based programs and public housing. Please support this Act.
- Address and improve the administrative and financial burdens of the portability program.

### **Fully Fund & Simplify the Public Housing Program**

- **Fully fund the operating costs and annual capital accrual needs of public housing.**
- **Unlock the value of public housing assets** by providing PHAs with a variety of tools to leverage and invest in the preservation of their properties.
- **Increase PHAs' flexibility** to use available resources for their highest priority needs, regardless of funding source.
- **Establish protected capital reserve accounts** to allow PHAs to responsibly plan for future needs.
- **Enhance incentives for energy efficiency upgrades**, and make these fully accessible to small agencies like FHA.

- **Provide Tools and Funding for New Development of Affordable Housing Stock**
- **Fund Section 202 Housing for the Elderly.** *This program has not been funded in two of the last four years, with no additional funding planned. Demographically, our population is aging and there is a huge need for additional affordable housing for elderly. Funding of this program is vital to meet this need. CFHA is poised to develop Section 202 Housing, and asks that this program be funded.*
- **Fund the Section 811, New Development Program.** *This program has not been funded in three of the last four years. This program serves disabled persons, a highly vulnerable population.*
- **Capitalize the Housing Trust Fund.** *This program was enacted in 2008, but remains unfunded, despite its innovative nature, which is designed to support the production, preservation and rehabilitation of affordable housing. CFHA could use HTF funding to expand the affordable housing stock in Flagstaff.*
- **Restore adequate funding for the HOME Investment Partnership program.** *This proven and effective program empowers States and localities to design and implement affordable housing strategies to meet locally determined critical needs.*
- **Preserve and strengthen the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.**
- **Eliminate Barriers to PHA Eligibility.** *A number of federal housing programs limit eligibility to “private nonprofit organizations.” The various statutory and regulatory definitions of “private nonprofit organization” currently in effect under these programs have collectively served as a barrier to the participation of PHAs and redevelopment authorities, since these agencies typically do not enjoy nonprofit status under the Internal Revenue Code. For example, PHAs are prohibited from acting as sub grantees under the Emergency Solutions Grant program, even though many local government grantees want PHAs to fill that role. And PHAs and redevelopment authorities are barred from collecting developer fees under the CDBG program, even though they often engage in the same development work as for-profit and private nonprofit developers of affordable housing.*

### **Find Savings within HUD’s Budget**

- **Consolidate HUD activities and focus on core services.** *Obviously, HUD is a huge administration; we believe there are opportunities to consolidate HUD’s activities and focus on its core affordable housing mission. For example, funding to HUD’s Policy Development and Research Department could be reduced. The number and nature of studies completed by HUD, either internally or under contract to outside consultants is excessive and expensive. This money could be better used serving our constituents. Rather than developing new programs- let’s focus on those we have. Another area of potential savings is in grant activities that are unrelated to HUD’s core mission; for example, the Doctoral Thesis Program, and the Natural Experiments Grant Program. There may also be savings in areas such as Fair Housing Enforcement.*

- **Eliminate expenditures related to Executive Order 13166.** *This is a Clinton era Executive Order stating that failure to provide materials and translation to persons of limited English proficiency is a form of discrimination based on National Origin. The Executive Order was based on a Supreme Court Ruling that has been overturned. Implementation of this Executive Order has had enormous costs. HUD is currently providing forms in over 20 languages. Congress should specifically exclude funding for activities under this Executive from HUD funding.*
- **We support an in-depth study of the HUD infrastructure to streamline the HUD bureaucracy.**