

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 16, 2025

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Turner:

We are deeply alarmed and troubled by reports that you terminated hundreds of probationary employees on Friday, and are planning to cut the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) workforce by 50 percent or nearly 4,300 staff.¹ Initial reports suggest no program office would be spared, with staffing cuts ranging from 10 percent to 84 percent. Some of the most drastic reductions impact areas that support highly vulnerable people, including seniors, homeless veterans and families, and people with disabilities, and provide billions of dollars to cities and counties across the country. Without sufficient staff to run these programs, community and economic development projects, disaster recovery efforts, and housing development across the country will be delayed and could come to a grinding halt.

Between 2012-2019, HUD's staffing levels fell by over 20 percent. During that time, independent audits from the HUD Office of Inspector General and U.S. Government Accountability Office repeatedly pointed to capacity gaps across HUD. This includes not having enough staff to support communities devastated by disasters, not having enough staff to meet HUD's legal obligations under the Fair Housing Act, and not having enough staff to process applications that would allow for more housing to be built faster.² Congress has worked to address these inadequacies inch by inch through the annual Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. As a result, at the start of your tenure as Secretary, HUD's staffing capacity was near its 2012 levels with a dedicated workforce ready to advance HUD's mission. So much of that hard-fought progress has been wiped away in less than three weeks, and between the deferred resignation program and termination of probationary employees, overall staffing levels will be cut by 13 percent at HUD.

Upon your confirmation, you spoke of the "opportunity to restore HUD to its core mission of supporting strong and sustainable communities and quality, affordable homes — serving our nation's most vulnerable".³ In your address to HUD's workforce on February 6, you highlighted the many challenges facing HUD and communities: a housing affordability crisis, homelessness,

¹ <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/daily-labor-report/us-housing-department-to-shed-half-its-workers-union-chief-says>

² https://www.hudoig.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/hud-oig-fy-2025-tmc-report_final_508_1.pdf

³ https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/hud_no_25_025

and disaster recovery efforts.⁴ On his very first day in office, President Trump signed an executive order to pursue actions to “lower the cost of housing and expand housing supply”.⁵ We could not agree with you more that we need to focus on addressing all of these challenges head on, but nearly every action this Administration has taken to date on housing are completely counter to these goals. President Trump’s reckless threats of blanket tariffs on friendly nations could drive up housing costs, deter new development, and slow rebuilding efforts in disaster-impacted communities.⁶ Freezing already obligated funds, cancelling necessary program contracts, and hastily gutting HUD’s workforce will inevitably lead to costly delays, and many housing projects will fall apart completely, only making our current housing crisis worse.

We urge you to immediately stop any additional cuts to HUD’s workforce. We also request that the Department respond to the following by no later than Friday, February 21.

1. How many probationary employees were terminated – by office, division, and branch?
2. What factors did HUD consider in determining which probationary employees would and would not be terminated on February 14?
3. Were there any exceptions for offices that already lack sufficient capacity to address HUD’s legal obligations, statutory mandates, and for the purposes of public safety, law enforcement, and security?
4. What steps did the Department take to ensure the continuity of programs for families and communities prior to terminating hundreds of employees?
5. What role did you personally play in directing and reviewing employee lists vis-à-vis the DOGE team and vis-à-vis the political appointees leading each office component?
6. How much notice was provided to terminated employees?
7. If terminations were conducted under 5 C.F.R. § 315.804, what justification was provided to employees as the reason for their termination?
8. Consistent with the staffing review you are conducting in response to the February 11 executive order, please provide HUD’s comprehensive list of the functions performed by each office that are mandated by statute or related to public safety and law enforcement, as well as the current number of staff associated with those functions.⁷
9. For the employees who have accepted the deferred resignation offer, what is the estimated cost to taxpayers to pay those employees for *not* working through the end of the year?
10. The Committees on Appropriations intentionally funds each HUD program office separately to support program execution and fulfillment of HUD’s mission. How are the costs of the deferred resignations and planned reductions in force “necessary expenses” and consistent with appropriation law?

⁴ <https://x.com/HUDgov/status/1887595377047773564>

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/delivering-emergency-price-relief-for-american-families-and-defeating-the-cost-of-living-crisis/>

⁶ <https://www.nahb.org/blog/2025/02/trump-tariffs-will-drive-up-housing-costs>

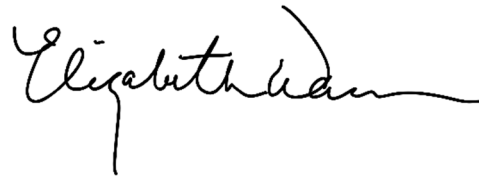
⁷ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/implementing-the-presidents-department-of-government-efficiency-workforce-optimization-initiative/>

We appreciate your prompt attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate



Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking, Housing, and
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