

NEW HAVEN LEGAL ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATION, INC.

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December 8, 2016

Dr. Ben Carson
c/o President-Elect Trump Transition Team
725 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10022

RE: Invitation to New Haven Dialogue About Affordable and Fair Housing

Dear Dr. Carson,

Congratulations on your recent nomination by President-Elect Donald Trump to lead the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). We reach out to you as advocates and concerned citizens alike who are committed to working with HUD on its crucial mission to provide decent, safe, and affordable housing for low-income families.

New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that provides free legal counsel to secure justice for and to protect the rights of low-income citizens of New Haven County. Our core mission includes an active housing unit that works to preserve and expand quality affordable housing for all. Mothers for Justice is an initiative of Christian Community Action, an ecumenical social service organization that expresses faithful witness by providing help, housing, and hope to those who are poor in New Haven. Mothers for Justice is a grass-roots community-based organization which is actively engaged in promoting change in programs and policies meant to improve the lives of women and their children.

As members of the New Haven community, we are moved by your story of rising to be a prominent neurosurgeon and member of the Yale Corporation, despite the obstacles you faced coming from a low-income environment. We listened with great interest to a recent interview in which you stated that "we cannot have a strong nation if we have weak inner cities." We hope that your first-hand experience with poverty will lend insight to your leadership at HUD.

We invite you to come back to New Haven at a future date to join us in a conversation, regarding the need for affordable housing in diverse, inclusive communities free from the scourge of historical discrimination. Specifically, we hope to facilitate a meeting with you, including low-income residents of New Haven who are so deeply affected by the affordable housing crisis, including both those tenants who live in public housing and rely on subsidized rent to support their families and those residents who do not have access to federally-subsidized housing and suffer as a consequence of their inability to afford rent.

The programs that HUD runs, including public housing, multi-family project-based housing, housing choice vouchers, and federally-insured mortgages are the greatest resource that we have to combat the housing inequity and instability in this country. Safe, affordable housing is indeed

one of the strongest safety nets for low-income families. We look to you to appreciate the structural nature of poverty and the importance of these HUD programs.

The importance of federally-subsidized housing as a safety net for low-income families can not be overstated. Nationally, two thirds of low-income families pay more than fifty percent of their income to housing costs. In Connecticut, the fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,285. In order to afford this, a family must make about \$51,500 annually. This family income is about twice what the average renter household makes. On a given night in Connecticut, approximately 4,000 people are homeless, including over 800 children.

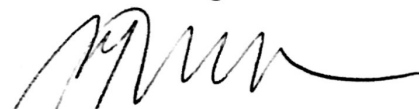
We also reach out to you about HUD's critical role of affirmatively furthering fair housing, given the federal government's historic support and promotion of housing discrimination. The Fair Housing Act ensures that all families, including the poorest ones, are able to choose the neighborhoods in which to live based on what is best for themselves and their families. We read with concern your editorial in which you described President Obama's fair housing policies as an "experiment" and a "mandated social-engineering scheme." We hope that as you undertake your new role leading HUD that you will see with fresh eyes the critical importance of both leadership to punish landlords and communities who intentionally deny housing to minorities and also the importance of actively ensuring open housing markets in communities that use zoning and other barriers to limit multi-family housing. We believe that an open and respectful dialogue about what these protections mean to us in New Haven would further our collective movement to a more just and fair nation.

Thank you for your time and attention to this letter. We look forward to speaking to you to coordinate a future meeting in New Haven. We can be reached at (203) 946-4811.

Sincerely,



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Housing Unit
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Reverend Bonita Grubbs
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