

National Alliance of HUD Tenants

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HUD Tenant Leaders Demand Senate Act NOW to Save 3.4 Million Elderly, Disabled and Families from Homelessness

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Elected leaders of the national US tenants union today demanded immediate passage by the US Senate of the FY 19 THUD Appropriations Bill to halt an "imminent catastrophe" of mass displacement should the shutdown last through February.

"Trump's shutdown has already lasted close to a month," said Geraldine Collins, 63, a disabled, retired medical administrator and President of the NAHT Board who lives in senior housing on Manhattan's Upper West Side. "If it lasts another month, there will be NO FUNDS to keep 3.4 million low income seniors, people with disabilities and families with children in their homes. We call on the Senate to pass the HUD Appropriations bill NOW to SAVE OUR HOMES!"

Collins noted that on Friday, January 11, Trump threatened to continue the shutdown even if he builds the Wall by emergency decree. Added Collins: "Trump tried to cut the Section 8 budget by 10% the past two years, but Congress wouldn't let him. We have to ask: Is Trump using his shutdown to attack Section 8 tenants, by other means?" Trump's Chief of Staff, Mulvaney, publicly embraced the Heritage Foundation's plan to phase out HUD rental housing over 10 years and began to implement this goal as Trump's Budget Director. "Congress needs to call Trump's bluff and fully fund HUD rental housing now."

On Monday, January 7, HUD announced that no funds are currently available to renew 1,150 Section 8 contracts that expired in December 2018 and January 2019, or another 550 contracts that expire in February 2019. An estimated 100,000 low income households already face repair and service cutbacks, rent increases and displacement.

Worse, another 21,150 Section 8 contracts housing 1.1 million low income renters have been funded only through February. In addition, HUD does not have funds to continue subsidies after February for 2.2 million more Section 8 Voucher recipients, administered by local housing authorities.

HUD typically pays more than 2/3 of the operating costs to private landlords in Section 8 housing. If Congress does not fund HUD past February 2019, owners could attempt to terminate the leases low income tenants unable to pay rents three or four times what they pay today, to cover operating costs.

"Trump has threatened to make the shutdown last for 'months or years' if he doesn't get his Wall," commented Deborah Arnold, 54, a minister, community activist and NAHT VP/South from Atlanta, Georgia. "Besides 3.4 million homeless Section 8 tenants, 38 million people who rely on Food Stamps to feed their families will be cut off in March. Trump's shutdown is a far greater threat to the American people than refugee families at the southern border."

Adds Eleanor Walden, 87, a long-time civil rights and social justice activist living in senior housing and NAHT Board Secretary in Berkeley, California, "It is outrageous that Trump and his Republican supporters in Congress are holding the nation's most vulnerable people hostage to a useless and wasteful Wall. Congress should increase funding for immigration judges for asylum seekers and end the shameful humanitarian crisis Trump has created at our southern border."

Comments Rachel Williams, 63, an Army widow, minister and long-time community activist in

Beaumont, Texas and NAHT Board VP/West: "Many Section 8 tenants are veterans who were formerly homeless before they got a Section 8 Voucher. Adding millions to the ranks of destitute and homeless people is deeply cruel and un-American. Homeland security begins with a home!"

On January 2, the newly elected House voted to approve a HUD Appropriations bill, previously passed by the Republican Senate, to fully fund Section 8. But Republican Leader McConnell refuses to bring this or any other funding bill to the Senate Floor, unless Trump will sign it, and Trump has vowed to reject any bill until Congress provides \$5.7 billion for his Wall. Democrats demand that Congress reopen closed agencies first, and debate "border security" and the Wall separately. NAHT leaders urge Congress to pass the HUD and Food Stamp funding bills and override Trump's veto if necessary.

Founded in 1991, NAHT is the national tenants' union representing 1.2 million Section 8 families in privately-owned, HUD assisted multifamily housing. NAHT's mission is to empower residents to save and improve their homes as affordable housing.

NAHT can connected interested media outlets with resident leaders and organizations across the US for local comments. Contact: Michael Kane, michaelkane@saveourhomes.org 617-522-4523 or 617-233-1885.