



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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May 2, 2014

The Honorable Tim Johnson
Chairman
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Chairman
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson, Chairman Hensarling, Ranking Member Crapo, and Ranking Member Waters:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to express serious concern with the ongoing housing crisis in our country. I commend you for recent efforts to address this crisis and remind you, as you deliberate various policy proposals, that poor and vulnerable households have a priority claim on our common resources. I urge you to improve the quantity and accessibility of safe and affordable housing by funding the National Housing Trust Fund.

For too many families, affordable and decent housing is still painfully difficult to find despite it being necessary for family security and stability. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, “The worsening situation for the nation’s 19.3 million very low income renters clearly reflects the severe economic dislocation of the recession. . . . The scale of the problem requires major strategic decisions. . . . The gap between the number of assisted units and the number of households with severe housing needs has never been wider.”

In *The Right to a Decent Home*, the Catholic bishops of the United States wrote:

Since decent housing is a human right, its provision involves a public responsibility. The magnitude of our housing crisis requires a massive commitment of resources and energy. Government must supplement and regulate the activities of private individuals and institutions in order to achieve our housing goals. A creative partnership of private enterprise and government is necessary.

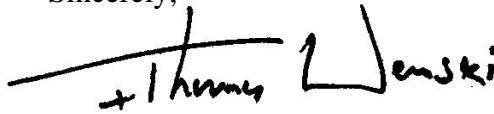
Congress created the National Housing Trust Fund because it recognized the “scale of the problem” that communities face in obtaining the resources to build, preserve, and rehabilitate affordable housing units for extremely low-income families. Because communities, local nonprofits, and housing providers would use its funding to leverage other streams of financing, it is a good example of such a “creative partnership.”

Unfortunately the Fund has never been capitalized, so this potentially powerful tool in addressing the affordable housing crisis remains unused. In adequately financing the Trust Fund, members of Congress would be sending a clear message that they are aware of and responsive to the basic needs of their most

vulnerable constituents. Funding would also create thousands of jobs in construction and permanent, ongoing operations, making it sensible economic stimulus as well.

I urge you to address the affordable housing crisis in this country by giving priority to the most vulnerable among us and providing funding for the National Housing Trust Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a distinct "W".

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski

Chairman

Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

cc: Members of the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

cc: Members of the Committee on Financial Services