

Dear Chair Cochran, Vice Chair Mikulski, Chair Rogers, and Ranking Member Lowey:

The organizations signed below – a list that includes \_\_\_ national, state, and local business, transportation, housing and community development, faith-based and civil rights organizations, as well as officials in municipal, tribal and state governments – urge you to increase the 302(b) allocation to the Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) to the highest possible level in fiscal year (FY) 2016.

The THUD allocation uniquely promotes the well-being of our communities by providing essential capital and program funding that enables public and private partners to build critical transportation infrastructure, spur economic development in communities, and help more than five million seniors, people with disabilities, and other families afford stable and safe housing. Through these investments, Congress supports small-business job creation, expands our nation's infrastructure capacity, encourages economic recovery and growth, reduces homelessness and housing instability, and promotes lasting community and family economic success.

The challenging fiscal environment makes the social and economic returns provided through the THUD allocation more crucial than ever. The THUD allocation should be a top priority. In recent years, however, investments made possible by the THUD allocation have been cut sharply. Since FY 2010, budget cuts and sequestration have reduced the THUD allocation by over 25%. These cuts have been forced on communities at a far greater rate than their ability to absorb, and the consequences are alarmingly clear.

The Department of Transportation is routinely overwhelmed by applications for discretionary grants like New Starts and TIGER that support public transportation, which is one indication that cities are struggling to accommodate the annual growth in ridership. The few communities that receive grants are able to fund transportation projects that serve as a lynchpin for other community improvements in affordable housing, access to education and employment, energy efficiency, and more. According to the American Public Transportation Association, more than 50,000 jobs (mostly private sector) are created with every \$1 billion of investment in public transportation.

Applications for rental assistance under the Department of Housing and Urban Development are similarly overwhelming, and years-long wait-lists for assistance are dishearteningly normal. The cuts have also caused the loss of 70,000 rental assistance opportunities for low-income families since 2013. HUD community development funding has been reduced by nearly 30% since FY 2010.

We urge Congress to reverse the sequestration cuts put in place by the Budget Control Act by enacting legislation similar to the FY 2014 and FY 2015 Murray-Ryan Bipartisan Budget Act. The THUD 302(b) allocation will be critical to meeting the nation's community development, housing and transportation needs. Without sequestration relief, non-defense discretionary programs, including important community development, housing and transportation programs, will experience the lowest spending on record<sup>1</sup> when the need for these programs is at historically high levels. The continued reductions to

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<sup>1</sup> As a percentage of gross domestic product

transportation, housing, and community development funding have caused communities to delay and even eliminate critical infrastructure, public service, affordable housing, and economic development projects.

As members of the Appropriations Committees, and more importantly as elected representatives of your state and local communities, we urge you to invest in the success of America's communities by increasing the 302(b) allocation to the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee to the highest possible level in FY 2016.