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January 28, 2015

Secretary Julián Castro
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Castro:

The Housing Authority of the City of Camden (HACC) has recently submitted an application for funding from the Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant program of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I am writing in support of their application and ask that you give it due consideration.

According to the U.S. Census, approximately 39% of Camden's residents live below the poverty level, making it one of the poorest cities in the country. Camden also has an unemployment rate of 36%, as well as a high school graduation rate of only 49%. Plagued by the city's high rates of poverty and unemployment and low high school graduation rates, the Housing Authority of the City of Camden's housing developments are ranked amongst the most economically deprived neighborhoods in the country. However, Camden has seen great progress in these sectors over the last three years through federal assistance and partnerships with private investors. Crime rates have decreased, and businesses are starting to move into the city, creating jobs and starting Camden's turn towards economic prosperity.

If selected to receive funding from the Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant program, the HACC would implement a plan to enhance and sustain progress in the Mt. Ephraim South neighborhood. The proposed plan would combine targeted strategies for the development and sustainability of both the neighborhood and housing by strengthening commercial corridors, enhancing green infrastructure, improving public safety, and developing high-quality, mixed-income units that will conform to Green Communities sustainability and energy efficiency standards. In addition, the proposal would improve the quality of life for the predominately low-income residents of Branch Village and Mt. Ephraim South by implementing evidence-based, outcome oriented interventions and strategies while linking residents to employment opportunities within the neighborhood. As the HACC serves as an agency of last resort for the citizens of Camden, the Choice Neighborhood Implementation funding would go a long way in assisting residents in obtaining economic prosperity. It is for these reasons that I support the Housing Authority of the City of Camden's application for funding from the Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant program.

Thank you in advance for giving the Housing Authority of the City of Camden's application full consideration.

Sincerely,



ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator