February 12, 2016

The Honorable Julián Castro

Secretary

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

451 7th Street, SW

Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Castro:

I write today regarding the historic investment request to help end family homelessness outlined in President Obama’s Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposal. Specifically, I commend the work from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on curbing growing homelessness trends, and ask for you to additionally and unambiguously prioritize the supportive housing needs of those with developmental disabilities.

As you know, about 64,000 families, including roughly 123,000 children, are currently homeless[[1]](#footnote-1), and the proposed investment of $11 billion over ten years is laudable. I do, however, have concerns about persons with disabilities being overlooked as we address housing needs in our communities, specifically those on the autism spectrum who have “aged-out” of our educational institutions and find themselves lacking support.

For thousands of young people with autism spectrum disorders – 50,000 youths every year – the end of high school means the end of the support and skills training they need to succeed in the new world of adulthood. Lacking meaningful support networks, the young adults often stall or regress from the social, behavioral, educational and emotional progress made during their time in school. Nationally, there is a lack of understanding about the services available to transitioning youth or the effectiveness of these services, and I write you today to request your commitment to both provide this segment of the population with supportive housing services and to educate the public on the availability there of.

I recognize that we have made strides for persons with disabilities in the past decade by amending section 811 of the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act[[2]](#footnote-2) (an effort that I led with the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act in the 111th Congress), but seek today to further break down administrative and regulatory barriers so we can together more efficiently serve the needs of this segment of our population that can often be underserved.

With that goal in mind, please provide detailed responses to the following questions:

1. Will any of the requested $11 billion outlined in the Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposal be allocated to build a supportive housing network for those with developmental disabilities, specifically those on the autism spectrum disorder who are currently “aged out” – or on the verge of “aging out” – of the system?

2. If the $11 billion request does not include a specific allocation for this segment of the population, what proactive steps are being taken at HUD to address the need for abundant supportive housing services for persons with disabilities?

3. How does HUD currently collaborate with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to ensure any supportive housing strategies include the needs of those with developmental disabilities? And how does HUD plan to collaborate with HHS in the future?

Thank you in advance for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

ROBERT MENENDEZ

United States Senator

1. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/budget/fy2017/assets/hud.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111s1481enr/pdf/BILLS-111s1481enr.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)