United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 5, 2015

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed:

We are writing to express our strong support for both the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF) and the HOME Investments Partnerships Program (HOME) and urge you to reject any effort to reduce, divert, or eliminate funding from either program. Specifically, we strongly oppose the legislation passed by the House Committee on Appropriations to direct all NHTF resources into the HOME program in FY 2016 and to prohibit any funds from any source going to the NHTF.

Although both the NHTF and HOME provide funding for affordable housing, they serve different populations – neither of which can afford further reductions in assistance. While HOME focuses on providing housing for a range of low-income households, the NHTF is the only federal program that provides new money specifically to expand the supply of rental housing affordable to extremely low income (ELI) households, who in most of the country earn less than the federal poverty level.

Neither the NHTF nor HOME provide sufficient funding to meet current housing needs, and funding for HOME already has been cut by more than half since FY 2010. Yet the need for affordable rental housing is higher than ever. ELI families face a national shortage of 7.1 million affordable rental units, and half of U.S. renters – nearly 41 million households, 9 million more than a decade earlier – were paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing in 2012.

As you know, Congress acted to ameliorate this crisis when it established the NHTF as part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (HERA), which was passed with strong bipartisan support and signed into law by President Bush. Now that the Federal Housing Finance Agency has determined that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac meet the criteria to set aside NHTF funds required by HERA, it is time to allow the NHTF to fulfill its intended purpose of providing additional – not substitute – funding to meet the unaddressed housing needs of millions of Americans.

As leaders on the THUD Subcommittee, we know you understand the importance of decent, affordable housing to our families, youth, people with disabilities, and seniors. We look forward to working with you and appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Patrick J. Leahy
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Joe Manchin III
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Gary Peters
United States Senator