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TOM COCHRAN

May 23, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation
Housing and Urban Development
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation
Housing and Urban Development
728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Congressional Leaders:

We, the undersigned members of The U.S. Conference of Mayors, urge you to support the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program at \$3.3 billion as you develop the FY2018 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies Appropriation bill. CDBG is one of the most effective federal programs for growing local economies and for providing a lifeline to families and communities with proven results.

Since FY 2005, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has collected accomplishment data for the CDBG program. The data highlights the program's flexibility to design and implement strategies tailored to meet local needs and priorities. It has provided funds in every state, including housing investments, public infrastructure improvements, and economic development, while also providing public services, including services for seniors, youth, the disabled, and employment training.

Despite being a key tool for aiding our communities, the CDBG program, like many programs, has taken a share of deep cuts in recent years, falling substantially—by nearly \$1.4 billion since FY2001. This program helps more than 1,200 cities, counties, states, and rural areas that meet the needs of low- and moderate-income people and communities, funding cuts have severely weakened the ability of grantees to revitalize their communities and respond to local need.

We share your commitment to the most effective use of taxpayer dollars, and believe that these grants have proven highly effective. Based on the data that grantees have reported to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development over the past nine years (FY2005 – FY2016), CDBG has:

- Helped over 1.3 million low - and moderate-income persons through single-family, owner-occupied rehabilitation, homeownership assistance, energy-efficient improvements, and lead-based abatement, among other activities;
- Created or retained **387,109** jobs for low- and moderate-income people through a variety of economic development activities;
- Benefited over **42** million low- and moderate-income persons through public improvements including senior centers, child care centers, and centers for people with disabilities;
- Benefited over **133** million low- and moderate-income persons through public services such as employment training, meals and other services to the elderly, services for abused and neglected children, assistance to local food banks, and other services;
- Helped Seniors Live Independently. CDBG funds are used to rehabilitate the homes of low- and moderate-income elderly persons to allow them to age in place, thereby, avoiding costly assisted living and nursing home care. CDBG provides resources to Meals on Wheels and other local food programs to ensure our low- and moderate-income seniors receive daily nourishment and contact. Further, CDBG funds are used to build community centers to allow seniors to receive health and recreational services to stay engaged and healthy;
- Strengthened Families and Communities through Homeownership. CDBG funds are used to assist credit worthy, working families with down payment and closing cost assistance to purchase a home. Homeownership stabilizes neighborhoods, allows families to build assets, and adds to the local tax base;
- Created Safer Communities. Local communities use CDBG to work with local police departments and neighborhood leaders to fight crime and make neighborhoods safer places to live and work by creating and expanding neighborhood watch groups, making safety improvements to homes and businesses, and encouraging local police sub-stations to move into high crime areas;
- Invested in Our Next Generation. Local communities use CDBG funds to provide afterschool programs to low-income children, summer jobs for low-income youth, and build recreation centers to provide a safe outlet for learning, sports and personal growth.

Additionally, every \$1.00 of CDBG leverages an additional \$3.65 in non-CDBG funding.

CDBG makes its way into the local economy through an extensive network of local organizations and remains a lifeline for families and communities. It is one federal program that touches the lives of nearly every American in some fashion. Over 7,200 communities have access to the funds and rely on the program to enhance their life and community. **Every State, Territory, and Congressional District receives or has access to CDBG funds.** The pressing need in the current economy for these funds remains critical.

While we understand the difficult fiscal decisions you must make in Washington, we appreciate your consideration of this important request and strongly urge you to support at least \$3.3 billion for the CDBG program in FY18 to help grow local economies.

Sincerely,

Mick Cornett
President, U.S. Conference of Mayors
Mayor of Oklahoma City

Mitchell Landrieu
Vice President, U.S. Conference of Mayors
Mayor of New Orleans

Stephen K. Benjamin
Second Vice President, U.S. Conference of Mayors
Mayor of Columbia (SC)

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
U.S. Conference of Mayors

Additional mayors who have signed onto this letter:

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Florence (AL) Mayor Steve Holt
Gadsden (AL) Mayor Sherman Guyton
Montgomery (AL) Mayor Todd Strange
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North Little Rock (AR) Mayor Joe A. Smith
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Costa Mesa (CA) Mayor Katrina Foley
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Downey (CA) Mayor Fernando Vasquez
Dublin (CA) Mayor David Haubert
Encinitas (CA) Mayor Catherine Blakespear
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West Allis (WI) Mayor Dan Devine
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