



March 27, 2015

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

Dear Secretary Castro:

We write to you today to express our strong support for the Department of Housing and Urban Development requiring all government subsidized housing be made smokefree. Such a step would be historic in protecting public health and especially the health of our children in our nation's most vulnerable populations.

Secondhand smoke contains many poisons, and exposure to these toxins poses health risks for all individuals, particularly children and pregnant women. The 2006 U.S. Surgeon General's Report details how even small amounts of exposure can have serious health effects, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), lung cancer, heart disease and respiratory infections. Asthma is disproportionately prevalent among residents of federally-assisted public housing, so eliminating smoking in public housing would also be an important step forward in preventing asthma attacks and protecting individuals with asthma from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke exposure.

A February 2015 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study found that two in five children overall are exposed to secondhand smoke and even more troubling seven in ten African American children are exposed to secondhand smoke. The study also found that while there has been a significant reduction in exposure to secondhand smoke among people who rent their homes, renters are still almost twice as likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke compared to those who own their homes. Implementing smokefree

regulations in all government-subsidized housing would decrease these rates of exposure to secondhand smoke and promote the health of residents.

As you may be aware, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also published a study in Preventing Chronic Disease that estimated annual cost savings of \$497 million in health care and housing-related costs if all government-subsidized housing was made smokefree. The study examined, among other indicators, health care expenditures attributable to secondhand smoke exposure, renovation-related costs in housing units where smoking has occurred, and the cost of smoking-attributable fires. Looking at healthcare expenditures alone, the authors estimate that smokefree policies in subsidized housing would yield approximately \$310 million in annual savings due to averted secondhand smoke-related health care. The study notes that actual savings would likely be even higher because smokefree policies would encourage current smokers to quit, so cessation services should be provided to residents to increase the likelihood of successful quit attempts.

There are very significant health benefits to implementing a smokefree policy in all government subsidized housing, as well as nearly half a billion dollars in annual cost savings. Our organizations are strongly committed to working with you and your department to ensure that all residents of HUD-assisted housing live in healthy environments. Please contact Erika Sward at the American Lung Association (202-785-3355) or James Baumberger at the American Academy of Pediatrics (202-347-8600) if you have any questions or if we can assist in any way.

Sincerely,

Advocacy Council for the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology
American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American College of Osteopathic Surgeons
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
First Focus Campaign for Children
Green and Healthy Homes Initiative
Legacy
National Association of County and City Health Officials
Nemours Children’s Health System
School-Based Health Alliance
Trust for America’s Health

cc: The Honorable Shaun Donovan, Director, Office of Management and Budget