



**The HUD Budget:
A Statement from William R. Tisdale, President and CEO
Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council**

March 9, 2017 - Yesterday, news broke that the current President's administration is considering a \$6 billion budget cut to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Such a cut is unconscionable and must not happen.

Among the specific HUD programs that could be eliminated, or reduced to ineffectual husks of their current status: the Housing Choice Voucher Program, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program and other programs that fund development of affordable housing and assistance for people with disabilities, the elderly, homeless veterans, and Native Americans. It defies credulity and common sense to imagine that private sector sources could or would step up to fill the void that ending these programs would cause.

Further, and perhaps most critical for enforcement of fair housing laws, the proposed budget reductions may eradicate the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. CDBG dollars flow from HUD to cities and counties; those local jurisdictions, in turn, expend CDBG funds on projects that affirmatively further fair housing. **In Wisconsin, CDBG funds are a critically important instrument for the enforcement of fair housing laws.** It is my opinion that ending the CDBG Program would represent a federal repudiation of HUD's responsibility to promote fair housing and enforce the federal Fair Housing Act.

At present, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council and its satellite offices, the Fair Housing Center of Greater Madison and the Fair Housing Center of Northeast Wisconsin, deploy CDBG dollars to provide essential fair housing enforcement and education services in **11 jurisdictions**: Madison, Dane County, Waukesha County, Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, Milwaukee County, Fond du Lac, Neenah, Appleton, Green Bay, and Oshkosh. Without these local contracts, our ability to enforce fair housing laws and assist victims of illegal discrimination would be markedly reduced. Also important to know is that among our other activities, the Fair Housing Council uses those local CDBG funds to enforce local fair housing laws, which often include more protected classes (such as gender

identity, participation in Housing Choice Voucher programs, or student status) than state and federal fair housing laws. But without CDBG funds, we would have no resources to enforce those local laws, thereby leaving complainants who have experienced discrimination based on gender identity, for instance, without access to the services we provide.

Overall, I ask you to consider these facts:

- metropolitan Milwaukee and other Wisconsin communities remain extremely segregated based on race, ethnicity and income,
- poverty in Wisconsin is at the highest level in 30 years,
- homeownership rates are at the lowest point in 50 years, and
- half of all American renters are 'cost burdened,' meaning they pay more than a third of their income toward housing costs, and a quarter of renters pay more than 50% of their income toward housing. People of color and people with disabilities are more likely to be severely cost burdened than white housing consumers or people without disabilities.

In this context, cutting HUD's programs that expand housing choice and affordability makes no sense whatsoever. To do so would be to abandon our moral and legal obligations to ongoing civil rights enforcement, to support working-class and low-income Americans, and to protect the members of our communities who are most vulnerable to harm caused by unlawful housing discrimination.