

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 18, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Secretary Shaun Donovan
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear President Obama, Secretary Donovan, Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi,

During a tough economy and a slow recovery, the American people want leaders, at all levels of government, to tighten their belts when it comes to spending taxpayer dollars. I couldn't agree more.

With a \$1.5 trillion dollar deficit and a \$14 trillion national debt, there are virtually no programs immune from budget reductions. This doesn't mean we should cut blindly. The key is prioritizing our spending when it comes to worthy programs. I am concerned about the spending priorities at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Reports show that structural homelessness in Massachusetts and across the nation has increased dramatically since the beginning of the foreclosure and economic crisis, and families with children are the fastest growing segment of new homeless. An unacceptable number of families are living in motels, hoping for the day when they can again afford a decent place to live.

HUD programs provide rental assistance for low income citizens and other homelessness programs. These rental programs are vital to Massachusetts and should be protected at a time when the Massachusetts unemployment rate is above eight percent.

Like all areas of government, in order to protect what works, HUD must trim its budget and stop funding wasteful, and inefficient programs. HUD continues to waste taxpayer dollars by pushing a failed policy that seeks to subsidize and maximize homeownership opportunities. For example,

HUD's HOME Investment Partnership program continues to spend taxpayer dollars promoting homeownership, even though rental programs have proven to be more effective in promoting stability in low income neighborhoods.

My office recently requested that the Congressional Research Service (CRS) investigate the HUD budget. Both CRS and the Office of Inspector General have confirmed that HUD continues to provide billions in funding for homeownership promotion programs targeting low income Americans. This does not make sense given past results. Many of these programs have led to foreclosures, hurt low income families and communities, and contributed to the financial crisis and the subsequent recession.

If HUD prioritizes its spending, then families across the Commonwealth will be able to keep a roof over their heads until they are able to get back on their feet financially. This is going to take leadership from President Obama, Secretary Shaun Donovan, and Congress so we are judicious in our spending reductions.

As part of the effort to get our fiscal house in order, we should reform our housing policies and direct agencies to provide maximum protection for low income rental assistance recipients while also saving money by eliminating programs that we know do not work and in fact do harm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Scott P. Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "B".

Scott P. Brown
U.S. Senator