

Testimony of James Arthur Jemison II
Nominee to be Assistant Secretary of Public & Indian Housing of the
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
October 7, 2021

Chairman Brown, Ranking Member Toomey, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity appear before you today as the nominee for Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing (PIH) in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I want to thank President Biden for nominating me, and Secretary Fudge for her support of my candidacy. I also want to thank my family and friends for their love, support, and guidance. I am grateful to my father James and particularly my mother Beverly and my sister Jamileh for their guidance and support. Finally, I want to thank my wife, Annie. She has been a partner to me, our three children, and entire family for the last 20 years.

HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing funds the operation and capital that supports 3.2 million American families every night. Public housing is at the center of many American neighborhoods and PIH rental assistance supports many American households and landlords. Indian Development Block Grant supports many thousands of families and elders in Tribal Communities every day. I am excited to work with the professionals who have maintained these capital assets and voucher resources since 1938.

I have spent the last 25 years working in city planning and development first as part of a team, and later leading the development and preservation of market-rate and affordable housing units as well and the parks, streets, transportation facilities, commercial districts, downtowns, and employment centers that bring those communities together.

I have done this by bringing together the feasibility, planning, design, permitting and financing concepts (private, public, and philanthropic) required to execute these strategies. Bringing expertise together with community engagement, I have performed this work in downtowns, neighborhoods, and small towns.

Specifically, I have experience in three great American cities - Boston, Washington, and Detroit – as well as the smaller cities and towns of Massachusetts. As part of partnerships with developers, community leaders, funders, boards, and commissions, my work has resulted in the preservation of more than 4,000 affordable units and 3,500 new market and affordable housing units, including hundreds of public housing units.

For the last nine months, I have had the opportunity to lead HUD's Community Planning & Development (CPD) Office as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. I appreciate the partnership CPD staff members have extended to me.

However, I am particularly honored to be nominated to be the steward of this institution because I grew up in public housing. From 1983 to 1988, I lived at 693 Main Street, Apartment #14, in Amherst Massachusetts. It was a newly built unit, operated by the Amherst Housing Authority.

Amherst is what would be described as an area-of-high-opportunity. It is college town surrounded by five colleges and farming communities where I worked in the summers.

This housing opportunity stabilized my family and made a difference in my life as affordable housing does for so many Americans. Making it work for more Americans has been my mission ever since I left that apartment for college; later for a summer fellowship program that grew my interest in housing; and later for graduate school in City Planning.

I know that well-designed and well-maintained public housing and rental assistance can work as part of the American safety net. I know this personally because I have lived it. I know it professionally because I have worked to make sure affordable housing is part of every development initiative in which I have been involved.

I have spent my entire career collaborating to create better places for every kind of American, where everyone can live together. Public housing is central to that mission.

If confirmed, I will use all of my energy and experience working transform the public housing; ensure vouchers stabilize households and end homelessness; and support the strength of tribal communities across America.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to your questions.

###