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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6075

January 11, 2026

The Honorable Scott Turner
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Turner:

I write to invite you to appear before members of the United States Senate to testify at a Spotlight Forum entitled, "Fair Housing Under Fire: Examining HUD's Fair Housing and Civil Rights Rollbacks." The forum will discuss allegations made by whistleblowers inside the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) suggesting that HUD is obstructing enforcement of fair housing and civil rights laws under your leadership. This forum will take place at 3:30 p.m. ET, on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, in Senate Dirksen G-50.

HUD has a legal responsibility to enforce the Fair Housing Act, as well as other civil rights laws in housing. HUD's Office of Fair Housing (OFH) within the Department's Office of General Counsel (OGC) and its Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) play a key role in HUD's efforts to ensure compliance with its legal obligations.¹ These offices implement and enforce the Fair Housing Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).² These laws offer critical protection to ensure that people across the country can access safe and affordable housing on fair and equal terms. Congress enacted them to prevent discrimination in housing, lending, and federally funded community development and disaster recovery programs.

According to current and former employees within OFH and FHEO, HUD leadership is systemically undermining the Department's fair housing, civil rights, and VAWA implementation and enforcement efforts, putting the Department on "an unalterable course

¹ HUD, "About the Office of General Counsel - Fair Housing," <https://www.hud.gov/stat/ogc-about>.

² HUD, "Report Housing Discrimination- Applicable Law and Protected Classes," <https://www.hud.gov/reporhousingdiscrimination#close>.

towards violating its statutory and regulatory obligations” to the American public.³ Specifically, these employees have provided information that:

- HUD leadership told staff that fair housing work was “not a priority,” described a well-staffed OFH as an “optics problem,” and reduced the size of the office by 70 percent. Whistleblowers allege that HUD leadership informed existing OFH staff that “fair housing was ‘not a priority’ of the administration, that less civil rights work would be performed under this administration, and that there was an ‘optics problem’ with [OFH] being as large as it was.”⁴ Despite warnings that pulling staff away from civil rights and fair housing efforts could hinder HUD’s ability to comply with its statutorily mandated functions, HUD leadership reportedly took steps to reduce the size of OFH by 70 percent. HUD officials allegedly informed “OFH attorneys . . . that they could go to almost any other office [within the agency, but] must simply abandon fair housing work.”⁵
- HUD officials led workforce reassignments that have decimated the Department’s capacity to enforce VAWA. Whistleblowers allege that HUD will no longer have the capacity to fulfill its VAWA obligations due to staffing cuts implemented by the Trump Administration. The Department was reportedly moving to reassign 75 percent of the VAWA team at OFH, including its supervisors—a move that, if implemented, would leave the Department unable to support survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking.⁶
- HUD officials have implemented a “gag order” on attorneys and closed or halted over 100 housing discrimination cases. According to current and former HUD staff, HUD leadership has prevented OFH attorneys from communicating with external parties both within and outside of HUD “without express approval from political leadership,” inhibiting the agency’s ability to implement civil rights and fair housing laws. In addition, the agency has dropped “major investigations and cases concerning alleged housing discrimination and segregation, including some where the agency already found civil rights violations.”⁷
- HUD officials directed FHEO to delay Congressionally-mandated Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) funds. Congress appropriated tens of millions of dollars for FHIP in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024.⁸ According to the whistleblowers, FHEO staff urged leadership to allow FHEO to continue reviewing applications to obligate funds before they expired, but the Trump Administration directed FHEO to halt

³ Letter from Senator Warren to Acting Inspector General Brian D. Harrison, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, September 22, 2025, <https://www.banking.senate.gov/newsroom/minority/breaking-new-hud-whistleblower-claims-expose-trump-administrations-targeted-attacks-on-civil-rights-warren-calls-for-independent-investigation>.

⁴ Letter from Senator Warren to Acting Inspector General Brian D. Harrison, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General, September 22, 2025, <https://www.banking.senate.gov/newsroom/minority/breaking-new-hud-whistleblower-claims-expose-trump-administrations-targeted-attacks-on-civil-rights-warren-calls-for-independent-investigation>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Public Law 118-42.

its evaluation to assess if recent executive orders had any implication on the solicited grant activities and the application scoring methodology.

In the wake of these reports from OFH and FHEO staff, HUD does not appear to have taken steps to ensure that the agency is capable of fulfilling its statutory duties. Instead, HUD dismissed two of the whistleblowers one week after the New York Times published their allegations.⁹ Furthermore, according to reporting, HUD leadership issued internal guidance to further roll back the agency's enforcement of the law when they stated that they would "no longer prioritize...tenuous theories of discrimination," such as appraisal bias and discriminatory zoning restrictions.¹⁰ HUD has also reportedly characterized existing federal efforts to prevent redlining—a discriminatory practice involving denying certain communities access to financial services, like mortgages—as "legally unsound."¹¹

These allegations are particularly concerning in light of Senate Republicans' confirmation of Craig Trainor as Assistant Secretary of FHEO.¹² His record suggests that instead of faithfully upholding fair housing and civil rights laws, he will instead actively work to further dismantle them. For example, Mr. Trainor was sued by the NAACP and other civil rights groups in his previous role as acting head of the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) at the Department of Education for advancing a "legally flawed and unsupported interpretation" of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.¹³ Mr. Trainor's OCR division has also been characterized as "dangerous," "unavailable," "unable to do the work," and "the most useless it's ever been."¹⁴ It is my strong belief that Trainor is unsuitable for this position and poses a threat to civil rights and fair housing enforcement.

The enforcement of fair housing and civil rights laws is not an "optics problem," as administration officials have reportedly stated. Congress has directed HUD to prevent housing discrimination, regardless of which political party sits in the White House. The alleged efforts by HUD leadership to dismantle decades of progress are shameful, betray the American public, and represent a profound abuse of taxpayer dollars.

I have urged my Republican colleagues to call you to testify before Congress regarding these whistleblower reports. They have thus far failed, despite the critical importance of understanding HUD's current willingness and ability—or lack thereof—to implement and enforce the law. In lieu of an official invitation, I invite you to make yourself available to Congress to discuss

⁹ New York Times, "Two HUD Civil Rights Lawyers Dismissed After Raising Concerns About Fair Housing Enforcement," Debra Kamin, September 29, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/29/us/politics/hud-lawyers-whistleblowers.html>.

¹⁰ New York Times, "Trump Appointees Roll Back Enforcement of Fair Housing Laws," September 22, 2025, Debra Kamin, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/22/realestate/trump-fair-housing-laws.html>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Nomination of Craig Trainor for Department of Housing and Urban Development, 119th Cong. (2025), <https://www.congress.gov/nomination/119th-congress/25/55>.

¹³ NAACP LDF, "LDF Sues on Behalf of NAACP to Challenge U.S. Department of Education's 'Dear Colleague' Letter and Certification Requirement," Press Release, Apr. 25, 2025, <https://www.naacpldf.org/news/ldf-sues-on-behalf-of-naACP-to-challenge-u-s-department-of-educations-dear-colleague-letter-and-certification-requirement/>.

¹⁴ ProPublica, "A Gutted Education Department's New Agenda: Roll Back Civil Rights Cases, Target Transgender Students," Jennifer Smith Richards and Jodi S. Cohen, May 2, 2025, <https://www.propublica.org/article/education-department-civil-rights-donald-trump-discrimination>.

HUD's activities at Tuesday's spotlight forum. Your testimony will provide an opportunity for you to offer context on HUD's recent actions and practices as they pertain to the Agency's statutory duty to implement and enforce fair housing and civil rights laws. I also have yet to receive a meaningful response from you to a March 17, 2025, letter requesting information about HUD's fair housing efforts.¹⁵ I once again ask you to provide a response no later than January 13, 2026.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs

¹⁵ Letter from Ranking Member Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member Maxine Waters, and 106 Members of Congress to Secretary Scott Turner, March 17, 2025, https://democrats-financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/b_dem_ltr_hud_re_fheo_oversight_3.17.25.pdf.