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On behalf of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose over 900 congregations across North America encompass 1.5 million Reform Jews, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which represents over 2,000 Reform rabbis, we submit these questions regarding the nomination of Dr. Ben Carson as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. We urge Committee Members to make use of them during his nomination hearing.

The Reform Movement is the largest denomination in American Jewish life and has long supported and advocated for federal policy that increases availability of affordable housing, and that helps provide the means for people experiencing homelessness to make the transition from shelters and streets to stable homes. For Reform Jews, affordable housing is not just an issue of economics, but an issue of human dignity.

Jewish text establishes a long-standing tradition of hospitality among the Jewish people that inspires us to care about affordable housing for all. According to one interpretation of Jewish text, Abraham is judged to be greater than Job because while the latter "opened his doors to the road" (Job 31:32), Abraham left his tent to seek guests among the passers-by (Genesis 18:1-8). Furthermore, Abraham "got busy and built spacious mansions along the highways, and stocked them with food and drink, so that whoever entered ate, drank, and blessed Heaven" (Avot 1:5; Avot d'Rabbi Natan 7). More recent Jewish history, with its exiles and expulsions, is a powerful reminder of our special obligation to provide for those with no shelter.

Affordable Housing

1. Better access to affordable housing is one of the single most effective ways of combatting childhood poverty.¹ Affordable housing allows families to spend funds on other priorities, and can give children access to better schools. You have mentioned "making our inner cities great for everyone" as one of your highest priorities.² What steps would you take in your position as HUD Secretary to ensure access to affordable housing for children who most need greater opportunities?
2. A study from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University reported that nearly three out of four of the 9.6 million lowest income renters, people who earn less than \$15,000 per year, put more than half of their income towards their housing.³ This

¹ <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/2000086-Reducing-Child-Poverty-in-the-US.pdf>

² <http://www.npr.org/2016/12/05/503150852/trump-taps-ben-carson-for-secretary-of-housing-and-urban-development>

³ http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/jchs_2016_state_of_the_nations_housing_lowres.pdf

makes it nearly impossible to afford other necessities such as food, transportation, and healthcare. What policies do you believe the Department of Housing and Urban Development can enact to combat this trend?

3. The President-elect's transition plan has listed increased spending on infrastructure among its highest priorities.⁴ Low-income housing would be one of the most cost-effective infrastructure investments by spurring community development and revitalization.⁵ As a member of the Trump administration, how would you advocate for any infrastructure policy to include housing development targeting at the communities in most need?

Homelessness

4. Overall, the number of people experiencing homeless has dropped since 2010. The November 2016 report from the Department of Housing and Urban Development is welcome news that demonstrates the power that federal and local programs have had in combatting this issue.^{6,7} Chronic homeless has dropped 35% since 2007, which is also indicative of the success of several federal and state programs targeted at the issue.⁸ How will you work to help this trend continue? What is your position regarding the federal government's role in fighting homelessness?

Vulnerable Populations

5. HUD's shelters are essential to women and girls, particularly those who are victims of abuse and are living in shelters. Women and girls who have been abused utilize transitional, public, and rental housing, where they are provided with services to ensure their safety, as maintained under the Violence Against Women Act. What emphasis will you place on ensuring that women and girls continue to have access to physical and emotional safety through HUD's shelters?
6. People with disabilities are among the primary intended beneficiaries of many HUD programs.⁹ Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons With Disabilities is the only HUD program designed exclusively for persons with disabilities, and other programs also provide assistance to this population. While these programs are effective methods of meeting the needs of people with disabilities, they are frequently underfunded.¹⁰ In addition, people with disabilities often face discrimination and inaccessible facilities

⁴ <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/policies/an-americas-infrastructure-first-plan>

⁵ http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC_Housing-As-Infrastructure.pdf

⁶ <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.citylab.com/housing/2016/04/hud-launches-the-national-housing-trust-fund-to-support-extremely-low-income-renters/476817/>

⁸ <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/11/hud-us-homeless-population-lower-nationally-higher-west>

⁹ <http://www.thearc.org/what-we-do/public-policy/policy-issues/housing>

¹⁰ <http://www.tacinc.org/media/52012/Priced%20Out%20in%202014.pdf>

when they seek housing.¹¹ How would you bolster programs designed to assist people with disabilities? What policies would you support to combat discrimination against people with disabilities in housing?

7. The February 2012 HUD Equal Access Rule, in tandem with the September 2016 HUD final rule regarding gender identity and equal access, protect LGBTQ people from discrimination in federally-funded housing programs.^{12, 13} What do you believe is the role of these rules? Despite anti-discrimination policies in HUD-sponsored programs, LGBTQ individuals can, and frequently do, face discrimination when renting and purchasing a home. What do you believe HUD's role is in protecting LGBTQ people from discrimination in privately-owned housing facilities? LGBTQ people also experience higher rates of homelessness, frequently attributed to discrimination in accessing housing, or from family members.¹⁴ How would you work to combat this issue?
8. Generations of racism influenced housing practices within private and public sectors and facilitated the creation of many of the segregated communities that exist until today.¹⁵ What measures do you believe the federal government should take to combat ongoing racialized housing patterns? The Fair Housing Act was passed to protect people from "discrimination because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability and the presence of children."^{16, 17} The Act is a landmark part of civil rights legislation and remains a critical barrier from harmful practices. As HUD secretary, how will you work to make sure it is enforced? What do you believe are the most serious challenges currently facing discrimination in housing?

¹¹ <https://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/library/dss-guidebook.pdf>

¹² <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1991/equal-access-to-housing-final-rule/>

¹³ https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/EqualAccess_FinalRule_2.3.12.pdf

¹⁴ <http://nationalhomeless.org/issues/lgbt/>

¹⁵ <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/05/the-racist-housing-policy-that-made-your-neighborhood/371439/>

¹⁶ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fair-housing-act-2>

¹⁷ https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/fair_housing_equal_opp/FHLaws/yourrights