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November 6, 2020

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
400 7th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Carson:

This letter is regarding the Maple Meadows Apartments located on South Maple Road in Ann Arbor and the recent reports of a bed bug infestation on the property and management's lack of responsiveness in addressing this issue. The Maple Meadows property is a low-income housing complex that participates in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program and is administered by the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC).

According to these revelations, tenants have been forced to relocate from their bedrooms due to the infestation, and management is requiring all residents to sign a form indicating that there is not a bed bug problem on the property in order to re-sign their lease, effectively forcing tenants to choose between ignoring the issue or losing their home. Despite exterminators' attempts to address issues in singular units, bed bugs remain a complex-wide problem that continue to threaten the health and safety of those living on the property. Addressing the issue in a singular residence does not provide a long-term solution for tenants of the property due to bed bugs' ability to spread rapidly across units, offering only a temporary fix for residents in these singular apartments.

We are highly concerned about the lack of responsiveness by management in addressing these complex-wide issues. We would like clarity on the expectations and standards of properties participating in the RAD program, and would like a deeper understanding of the oversight procedures that AAHC and HUD provide to the property. It is critical that these issues are addressed in a timely, efficient manner to protect the health and security of all residents.

I would like to understand HUD's involvement with the Maple Meadows complex, the process in determining the quality of living conditions of these properties, and what actions are being taken to ensure issues are addressed, including:

1. What are HUD's current determinations on the living conditions of the property, when was the last inspection of the property, and how often are these properties evaluated? Through what process are these determinations made, and what criteria contribute to these determinations?
2. What actions has HUD undertaken to ensure the continued quality of life and dignity of Maple Meadows tenants? Furthermore, what steps is HUD taking to ensure Maple Meadows has policies, procedures, staffing, and training in place to provide adequate maintenance, problem resolution, and transparency for tenants?
3. How often does HUD conduct oversight of AAHC and other administrative bodies to ensure they continue to address the needs of tenants in their respective properties? What are HUD's standards or expectations for these organizations in overseeing these programs and for standards of living on RAD participating properties? Does HUD actively engage with residents on these properties to ensure their needs and concerns are adequately addressed?
4. What steps is HUD taking to ensure Maple Meadows offers fair and transparent lease agreements for tenants, that requirements for lease agreements do not place excessive burden on tenant, and that these agreements do not infringe on the tenant's rights or lease obligations?
5. Through what process can tenants raise concerns over continued failures to address maintenance issues, living conditions, lease agreement disputes, and appeal procedures to HUD and local property management?
6. Have HUD's Detroit Regional Office or Ann Arbor Housing Commission received any reports, messages, emails, or other forms of communication from tenants of Maple Meadows highlighting issues and a lack of responsiveness by management in resolving problems on the property? If any residents flagged issues, what actions have been taken by HUD or AAHC to resolve problems?

No tenant should be forced to choose between remaining in an unsuitable home and the prospect of losing stable housing. It is crucial that federally subsidized properties continue to offer quality, affordable rental housing for the millions of in-need low- and moderate-income households that they serve. It is HUD's responsibility to provide stringent oversight to ensure these properties provide these crucial services. These properties must continue to ensure that the needs of their tenants are adequately addressed in an efficient manner, that lease agreements are fair and transparent. It is HUD's responsibility to ensure that these properties meet these standards.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter and please provide full and prompt responses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Dingell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

CC: Field Office Director Michael Polsinelli, Region V, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development