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August 12, 2016

Mr. Kevin Elsenheimer
Executive Director
Michigan State Housing Development Authority
735 E. Michigan Ave
P.O. Box 30044
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Director Elsenheimer:

This letter is concerning the unsafe living conditions at Towne Centre Place, located at 401 West Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI, that has resulted in great hardship and at times dangerous conditions to my constituents who live there. This is an 11-story complex which is home to 170 disabled and elderly residents. There are two elevators in the building to transport residents to their floors and both have not been in reliable and consistent working condition for the last six months, often with both being out of service at the same time. There has been a long history of complaints for years about this facility but it has now reached crisis proportions.

Multiple individuals have witnessed first-hand and confirmed the lack of elevator service with residents and local officials. The operating condition is causing significant hardship for the residents on a daily basis, but of greatest concern is this could jeopardize the health of residents of the complex because medical personnel are not able to reach patients. In addition, it has been reported that Meals on Wheels volunteers have had to climb 11 flights of stairs to provide meals for residents, and caretakers have not been able to access patients resulting in seniors going weeks without a bath. These reports are deeply concerning and could result in tragedy if unaddressed.

It is my understanding that MSHDA holds the loan to the building and is the state agency responsible for overseeing the operations of the building. The lack of reliable elevator service in an 11-story building has become both a safety and a quality of life issue for the elderly and disabled residents of the building. Without access to an elevator, tenants are not able to move freely from the building and medical services cannot be performed. In the event of a medical emergency, first-responders have to climb the stairs to and from the person seeking medical help. My staff has visited the building and has confirmed that both elevators have been out of service multiple times. We have also received complaints related to poor maintenance of the facility and infestations of cockroaches and bedbugs. It has been reported that furniture has been disposed of and residents are sleeping on the floor.

Besides a humane concern for those living there, it is my understanding that a number of occupants are recipients of Section 8 housing assistance, which as you know is the federal government's major program to assist very low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. MSHDA administers these funds for the State of Michigan.

It would appear that the current living condition is not decent, safe or sanitary. It is my understanding that repairs to the elevators are ongoing, and it is my hope that they be completed as soon as possible. In the meantime, in addition to hoping you are protecting the citizens who have no other place to live, I ask that the landlord be encouraged to temporarily relocate residents of Towne Centre Place who have faced serious hardship because of the disrepair of the elevators. Such a step will ensure that the safety and mobility of residents is provided for while repairs are taking place.

Thank for your continued attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions or need any more information.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

CC: Julian Castro, Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Rick Snyder, Governor, State of Michigan
Steve Arwood, Director, Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Amanda Edmonds, Mayor, City of Ypsilanti
David Rutledge, State Representative, 54th District of Michigan