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June 29, 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 Sycamore-Meadows Apartments in Superior Township and recent eviction notices served to several tenants on June 23rd. These notices have been delivered as a result of “community disturbances” from a block party on June 4th, with many tenants, including several not involved with the event, receiving these eviction notices. Tenants who were not involved have been required to write a statement proving they were not a part of the event.

We are highly concerned about the blanket service of evictions as a result of this event, particularly under the context of a pandemic, and would like clarity over the property management’s decision to evict these tenants, as well as a deeper understanding of the oversight procedures U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides to the property. This event has also highlighted several issues that continue to exist on this property.

In May 2018, Sycamore-Meadows Apartments received a “Below Average” rating in its annual HUD Management Occupancy Review (MOR). HUD required the property to review its tenant files and make necessary corrections and closed the MOR in August 2019. In November 2018, HUD conducted a Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) inspection of the property, resulting in a failing score of 35c, and required the property to correct all conditions within 60 days. Sycamore-Meadows Apartments requested two extensions to complete repairs, which were not corrected until November 2019. Despite addressing the issues highlighted in these reviews, many tenants have continued to raise concerns over a lack of maintenance to units, particularly a lack of proper ventilation and air conditioning, causing tenants to seek relief from the high temperatures outside.

I would like to understand HUD’s involvement with the Sycamore-Meadows complex, the process in determining the quality of living conditions of these properties, and what actions are being taken to address issues, including:

1. What are HUD's current determinations on the living conditions 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 proportion of units are inspected during evaluations, and is this cross-section of the complex the same units across multiple inspections, or is it a random sample in each inspection?
3. What actions has HUD undertaken to ensure the continued quality of life and dignity of Sycamore-Meadows tenants? Furthermore, what steps is HUD taking to ensure Sycamore-Meadows has policies, procedures, staffing, and training in place to provide adequate maintenance and transparency for tenants?
4. What steps is HUD taking to ensure Sycamore-Meadows provides a fair and transparent procedure for tenants to appeal eviction notices and other punitive measures, and request maintenance or highlight potential issues? Furthermore, what actions has HUD taken to ensure these procedures do not infringe on the tenant's rights or lease obligations?
5. What services does Sycamore-Meadows provide as a Neighborhood Networks Center, and what is HUD doing to ensure the property continues to provide these services?
6. Through what process can tenants raise concerns over continued failures to address maintenance issues, living conditions, and appeal procedures to HUD and property management?

Over 2 million low- and moderate-income households live in HUD-assisted or -insured multifamily 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. Sycamore-Meadows is a HUD-subsidized, 262-unit apartment complex and is subject to stringent oversight by HUD to ensure it provides these crucial services. These properties must continue to ensure that the needs of their tenants are adequately addressed in an efficient manner, and processes to address issues are resolved through a fair and transparent process. 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,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

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