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ASSISTANT REPUBLICAN WHIP



JOHN CULBERSON
7TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

January 20, 2016

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2372 RAYBURN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-4307
202.225.2571
FAX 202.225.4381

DISTRICT OFFICE:
10000 MEMORIAL DRIVE, SUITE 620
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77024-3490
713.682.8828
FAX 713.680.8070

INTERNET:
WWW.CULBERSON.HOUSE.GOV

The Honorable Julian Castro
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th St SW
Washington, DC 20410-0001

Dear Secretary Castro:

Concerned parents whose children attend an already overcrowded neighborhood school were understandably alarmed to discover that **2640 Fountain View**, a multifamily Low-Income Housing Tax Credit development project, has been proceeding at a rapid pace largely undetected in their neighborhood. The neighborhood school, Briargrove Elementary, is one of the best in Houston. Its success is built upon the commitment of the parents, teachers, and professional staff, and the small class sizes that are so critical to a good learning environment.

These concerned parents have pointed out that while the capacity for the school is 788, there are 834 students enrolled. It is already over capacity. To even consider building a development that would add potentially hundreds of additional students to an overcrowded school is nothing short of a disservice to every student who is already or would be enrolled in this school.

In addition to the overcrowding problems, it is my understanding that the Houston Housing Authority (HHA) did no research or due diligence with the Houston Independent School District (HISD) to determine what the impact of this project is on Briargrove Elementary.

Harvin Moore, the HISD Trustee for this area, did his own research as soon as he learned of this project. He confirmed that HHA never contacted HISD regarding this development and did no research regarding the impact on the school or traffic patterns around the schools. He could not find any research done by HHA prior to approving this project. I have enclosed Mr. Moore's formal objection to this project.

In addition, John Luman, a neighborhood leader, informed me of the unanimous opposition of the neighbors to this project. The residents are understandably worried about the additional stress on their local elementary school. Further, the current relief school for the area is expected to reach capacity in the coming years. Any additional students in the area would dislocate currently zoned students to another elementary

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school. Residents of this community are not only appalled that the HHA never considered school capacity when identifying a suitable construction location, but also are concerned about the lack of transparency throughout the process. Mr. Luman's letter is enclosed.

My constituents in this neighborhood have poured heart and soul into making Briargrove Elementary one of the best schools in Houston, and into making their neighborhood one of the safest and best places to live in Houston. This proposed project will add hundreds of children to an already overcrowded school, and the children in this neighborhood will have a significantly reduced chance of attending their own neighborhood school.

HHA has provided absolutely no reason behind their selection of the Fountain View location. A project map has been shared with my office to show that there are numerous other potential building locations within the high opportunity zones, with high quality schools, that are not at capacity. It appears that HHA has chosen this location simply based off of convenience, as HHA previously owned the property for office space.

Therefore, I want to ask you, Mr. Secretary, and your staff to immediately notify the City of Houston, the Houston Housing Authority, and all relevant authorities to stop all further work on this project until they determine, in an informed way, the impact on the neighborhood schools and the traffic patterns.

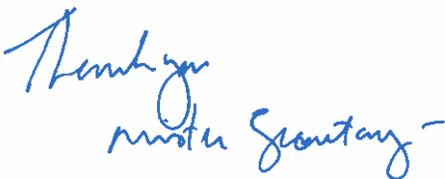
In the meantime, I want to ask you to reform the notification process. HUD should develop a formal site selection process so that everyone who would be affected by the government's construction of a multifamily unit is notified. The government should do their due diligence in ensuring that there will be a minimum impact on school overcrowding and traffic in the area where the project would be built. This should be a natural part of the process, particularly in our culture of transparency.

I look forward to your prompt response to my objection. Time is of the essence. This project is moving forward rapidly, and I need to know that you will take immediate action to stop or slow down this project until the Houston Housing Authority and the other entities involved in this project can prove that they have considered both local impact and interests.

Sincerely,



John Culberson
Member of Congress



Enclosures (2)

cc: Governor Greg Abbott
Commissioner George P. Bush
Mr. Lance Gilliam, Chairman, Houston Housing Authority
Senator Joan Huffman
Representative Jim Murphy
City Council Member Greg Travis
Mayor Sylvester Turner