

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Sherrod Brown
Executive Session of the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
HUD Nominations
11/28/2017

The Committee will vote today on three of President Trump's nominees to serve in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I want to congratulate each of the nominees once again, and thank them for their willingness to serve our country.

If confirmed, the nominees before us today would:

- oversee rental assistance for over 4.5 million low-income seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families;
- manage the federal government's primary mortgage insurance programs; and
- ensure that HUD has the workforce necessary to deliver on its important mission.

We're considering these nominees at a time when the nation faces a number of housing challenges. These range from the growing shortage of affordable rental housing, to the tight mortgage markets that are shutting so many creditworthy borrowers out of homeownership.

I will be supporting Ms. Tufts' nomination today. I hope that she will use her experience to advocate for HUD's workforce and empower HUD's employees to further its mission.

I will not be supporting the nominations of Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Kurtz.

Mr. Montgomery, having served previously in the position for which he has been nominated, would bring both valuable experience and an appreciation for the importance of the programs he would lead, if confirmed.

He has spoken about the value of the F-H-A as both a responsible engine of homeownership and a countercyclical tool to ensure mortgage credit remains available. He has also supported the Office of Housing's affordable housing programs.

Yet I am concerned that Mr. Montgomery will, in the interest of making the FHA a better partner to the mortgage industry – many of whom he has served as a board member or advisor – lose sight of the interests F-H-A and consumers.

Mr. Kurtz does not have experience with the programs he would oversee at P-I-H. However, he has a record of successfully administering other HUD and local programs, and a passion for affordable housing.

My concern is that this passion is unlikely to be matched with resources from this Administration.

The Administration has proposed large cuts to P-I-H programs, saying that they can make up for these cuts by relying on public-private partnerships and “flexibility.”

Meanwhile, they propose cuts to the funding streams necessary to support these partnerships. And at the same time, the Administration throws its weight behind \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts aimed at corporations and the wealthy - including provisions that would undermine the very tax incentives that the Administration relies upon to fund its public-private partnerships.

In this scenario, the flexibilities that Mr. Kurtz and the Administration advocate could just become ways to pass the buck for budget cuts down to local communities, and ultimately low income families. Programs helping working families and seniors will be cut in the name of a shared sacrifice that is not actually shared.

I hope that Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Kurtz prove me wrong, and that under their leadership HUD will emerge as a strong advocate for consumers, affordable housing, and assisted families.

These matters are far too important to too many Americans not to be.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.