

STATEMENT OF ANNA MARIA FARIAS
NOMINEE TO SERVE AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR FAIR
HOUSING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
SENATE COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING
AND URBAN AFFAIRS

JULY 18, 2017

Thank you, Chairman Crapo, Ranking Member Brown, and all the distinguished members of this committee.

I would like to thank President Trump for nominating me to serve as HUD's Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity and Secretary Carson for his strong support of my nomination.

I would also like to recognize the person who has been the most important part of my life, my mom, Ofelia Gutierrez, who is not here today because she is 89 years old and disabled. But she will be watching us. I am an only child and my cousins will watch the proceedings later because they are working and that is exactly where I want them — working.

I would also like to recognize the Honorable Kim Kendrick, former Assistant Secretary under President George W. Bush, and my fellow HUD nominees here on the panel. If confirmed, I look forward to working with them.

The mission at HUD is to provide access to safe, affordable housing to all Americans and my job would be the Chief Enforcer of the nation's fair housing laws. I am fully, strongly committed to those laws. FHEO leads the nation in the development, enforcement, and public understanding of the Fair Housing Act.

I come before you with over 20 years of federal government experience, including eight at HUD.

But, before that, you should know that I am a product of public housing. I grew up in the Housing Projects of Crystal City, Texas, a small town of 8,000. I am the only child of a single mother with a third grade education making \$12 - \$20 working 6 ½ days per week as a domestic.

My mother insisted that I get an education. She always said that her work was honorable and honest but she wanted something different for me.

My mother was willing to sacrifice in order to give me an opportunity to succeed and I quickly realized that hard work in my case could achieve success, not just survival.

As my High School valedictorian, I received a full scholarship to Boston University where once again I was blessed to come across someone who had my best interest at heart, a young philosophy professor who became my mentor. His name: William J. Bennett.

When he became Secretary of Education, I left a safe government job and spent four years working alongside him — never a dull moment.

In between administrations, I did the one thing I said I was never going to do — go back to a small town. I became the Executive Director of the housing developments where I grew up and became one of the first Executive Directors in the country to agree to live in the housing developments. The Board of Commissioners assigned me to what was then called Project Terror, the site of some murders, rapes, child prostitution, child pornography and drug dealing. My job was to clean it up.

I was able to do so only because the majority of the residents wanted the same things for their children and grandchildren that my mother had wanted for me when I was a child — safety and an education. Working with the residents, the Housing Authority received over a dozen awards and I was inducted into the Texas Woman's Hall of Fame.

Mr. Chairman, FHEO is an extremely important office to millions of Americans. If confirmed, my approach will be what it's always been. To follow the statute, the rules, and the facts. I will seek to enforce the fair housing laws vigorously and in an impartial manner. And I pledge to work in a bipartisan manner with this committee and all of Congress to meet the housing challenges facing our nation.

I thank the members of this committee for the honor and opportunity to appear before you today. I stand ready to answer your questions.