

**Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs United States Senate
Testimony of R. Hunter Kurtz**

Nominee for HUD Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing

Thank you, Chairman Crapo, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the Committee. I am humbled and honored to appear before you today as you consider my nomination to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. I want to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to Secretary Carson for recommending me for this position and President Trump for nominating me.

Joining me today are my wife Abby, my two boys Liam and Henry, my parents, Bob and Candy, as well as my brother Chase, my sister-in-law Autumn and their son Harvey. Additionally, I want to thank my friends from HUD who are here today and watching this hearing, both career and political employees.

Having served at the Department as a political appointee in the Bush Administration, a career civil servant during the Obama Administration, and now again as an appointee in the Trump Administration, I believe I bring a unique background and diverse perspective to the position for which I am nominated today. Additionally, I worked for the City of Detroit, where I interacted with many of HUD's programs. I am a "houser" at heart, a practitioner of HUD programs and a true believer in the mission of the Department. I have seen firsthand what we can

do with HUD's programs, but I have also had the opportunity to help craft rules and regulations that I have then had to implement at the local level. And I can affirm that what I thought was a good idea in my chair in Washington, made a lot less sense when sitting in my seat in Detroit.

My time with the City of Detroit, in many ways, was inspirational. I was blessed to work with an incredible team to help turn around a housing department considered among the worst performing in the nation. In conjunction with the Mayor's office, private sector developers, and the City's Housing Commission, we developed and produced safe and affordable housing for the City and its residents. While the renaissance that is now taking place in the City of Detroit is something of which I am extremely proud, the real reward for me is seeing the joy on the faces of individuals that we were able to help. They will always be a reminder of what we do in public housing and public service on a day to day basis: we help people.

One of the fundamental lessons I learned in working with the City was not only the impact of the policies we create at HUD and in Washington, but that a one-size-fits-all approach to creating more sustainable, affordable housing does not work. The issues Detroit faces are different than those faced by Seattle, Boise and Tribal Lands. We should give serious thought to allowing Public Housing Authorities more control of how they manage their portfolios and how to find

unique ways to address their own housing needs. The people who know best are the local officials managing the local PHAs, and we should provide them with the tools they need to address their own unique issues. If confirmed this will be a major goal of mine, and I look forward to working with you to make it a reality.

The nation is facing an affordable housing crisis and we cannot just build our way out of it. Today, only a quarter of those who are eligible for housing assistance actually receive it. We must find ways to graduate residents from public housing and put them on a path to achieving greater economic mobility and self-sufficiency, which allows us to serve others who need our assistance. This is a priority of Secretary Carson – one in which I wholly and enthusiastically support. If confirmed, I look forward to building on the successes of our current programs while working with the Secretary to implement new and innovate ways to achieve HUD's mission.

While I have spent some time discussing public housing programs, I would also like to let the committee know that, if confirmed, I would also focus on the Native American programs that are such an integral part of the work that is done in HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing. I had the opportunity to travel to Indian country with Secretary Carson earlier this year in my current capacity, and appreciate and understand the needs of our tribal partners. Please know that I am

committed to working with our tribal partners to ensure safe, decent and affordable housing for these communities.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with the members of this committee to help improve the lives of those Americans who rely on the programs managed by the Office of Public and Indian Housing.

Thank you again for your consideration of my nomination. I look forward to your questions.