

Durbin & Duckworth release statement on HUD plans to offer vouchers to residents of distressed public housing in Cairo

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CHICAGO—U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) released the following statement after the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced it would make housing vouchers available to residents of the Elmwood and McBride housing complexes located in Cairo, Illinois. HUD will also offer relocation counseling to the 183 affected households, helping relocate them to available nearby public housing or public housing anywhere in the United States.

“After years of mismanagement and misuse of funds within the Alexander County Housing Authority, strong federal action is welcome to address the housing crisis in Cairo. This is a massive undertaking for HUD, and it will require close dialogue with local authorities and residents to mitigate the destabilizing effects of relocation – not only for the affected families, but for the city of Cairo, which is already suffering the consequences of population decline,” said the senators. “We urge HUD to continue to hold public meetings and ensure residents have a clear understanding of their options.”

Last week, Senators Durbin and Duckworth pressed Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson to decide on a course for the future of the Alexander County Housing Authority (ACHA) developments as soon as possible and meet with ACHA residents throughout the decision-making process to make sure their concerns and needs are adequately addressed. The senators also invited Secretary Carson to visit Cairo to “see first-hand how dire and dangerous conditions have become for our constituents.”

HUD took control of ACHA last year, after Senator Durbin and Representative Mike Bost (R-IL) called on the Department to investigate allegations that residents were living in substandard, often dangerous conditions and hundreds of thousands of federal dollars had been misused by local housing authorities. Since the takeover, Senator Durbin has met with ACHA staff, tenants, and community activists to discuss the unsafe living conditions at Elmwood and McBride and his staff has worked closely with HUD and ACHA to address resident concerns.