

# **Durbin, Duckworth, Senate Democrats urge HUD Secretary Ben Carson to restore resources that protect LGBTQ from housing discrimination**

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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV) and 26 of their colleagues in a letter to Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson, urging him to reinstate resources that protect LGBTQ people from housing discrimination. These resources, designed to help housing providers comply with HUD’s nondiscrimination rules, were removed from HUD’s website in recent months.

**“It is concerning that HUD apparently removed these tools from its website, which are meant to assist grantees in meeting their underlying obligations under the law,”**

the senators wrote. **“Without these training resources, housing service providers will face additional challenges in trying to understand how best to meet the needs of their clients. The guidance resources that were withdrawn or removed are critical to ensuring nondiscrimination rules are fully and faithfully implemented.”**

LGBTQ people across the country face unique housing challenges, with 40 percent of LGBTQ youth representing all youth experiencing homelessness and with nearly 1 in 3 transgender adults who report having experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. The resources that were withdrawn from HUD’s website provide critical guidelines and information to ensure that housing providers comply with HUD policies that protect LGBTQ people.

The letter was signed by U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Bob Casey (D-PA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Tom Carper (D-DE), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Angus King (I-ME), Al Franken (D-MN), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Patty Murray (D-WA), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT).

The full letter can be found below:

Dear Secretary Carson:

It has come to our attention that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD, or the Department) has, in recent months, either withdrawn or removed from its website at least six resources that were designed to help housing providers comply with HUD nondiscrimination rules that protect LGBTQ people. These resources were developed in consultation with direct service providers and subject matter experts to assist HUD's community partners.

These changes are concerning given the unique housing challenges facing LGBTQ people across America. For example, LGBTQ youth represent 40 percent of all youth experiencing homelessness, meaning that efforts to undermine LGBTQ protections have a disproportionate impact on some of the most vulnerable young people in the country. Among adults, nearly 1 in 3 transgender people report having experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, yet a study found only 30 percent of shelters were willing to properly accommodate transgender women.

Namely, as we understand it, HUD has withdrawn:

- A proposed policy that would have required emergency shelters funded by HUD to hang a poster alerting residents of their right to be free from anti-LGBTQ discrimination; and
- A proposed survey designed to evaluate the impact of the LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

Further, as we understand it, HUD has removed from its website:

- A guide instructing HUD grantees on how to ensure equal access for transgender people;
- A self-assessment tool that allows shelters to evaluate how well they are doing in ensuring compliance with anti-discrimination regulations and best practices;
- A “decision tree” guiding shelters on how well their outreach/engagement, assessment, referral, enrollment, unit/bed assignment and ongoing service provision practices were providing equal access to LGBTQ people; and
- Training scenarios that help instruct providers on how best to deal with real-life situations that may arise in a manner that ensures equal protection.

It is concerning that HUD apparently removed these tools from its website, which are meant to assist grantees in meeting their underlying obligations under the law. Without these training resources, housing service providers will face additional challenges in trying to understand how best to meet the needs of their clients. The guidance resources that were withdrawn or removed are critical to ensuring nondiscrimination rules are fully and faithfully implemented.

When asked about this topic at House and Senate hearings, you noted that “the only reason that would remove anything is to look at it and determine whether it is effective” and that HUD “want to make decisions based on real evidence and facts.” We ask that you review these actions, describe precisely what evidence and facts justify these actions, and act promptly to restore resources to HUD’s website guiding providers on how to fulfill their nondiscrimination requirements under law.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.