



## GOP Targets HUD Homeless Policy

A group of House Republican lawmakers ask HUD Secretary Ben Carson to end the department's Housing First initiative, saying in a letter to Carson that the program launched by the Obama administration in 2014 penalizes homeless programs that refuse to stop drug-testing their clients.

"This is one of the worst examples of Washington's 'we-know-better-than-you' mentality and is just the kind of top-down mandates we need to get rid of," Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) says in the June 13 letter co-signed by 22 other GOP lawmakers.

Under Housing First, homeless people are given permanent federally subsidized housing and social services without being required to be sober or in drug treatment programs before being considered for housing. The program's preamble describes it as "an approach to quickly and successfully connect individuals and families experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment, or service participation requirements."

Critics of Housing First contend that it eliminates the stability necessary to overcome long-term problems such as addiction.

HUD, under former Secretary Julian Castro, pushed to expand the initiative at the expense of other existing programs; the effort unsettled veteran HUD staffers connected with those programs.

Several nonprofits requiring sobriety and participation in job programs before applicants can be accepted have been shut out of participation as a result, and some say they are on the verge of reducing or eliminating their participation in housing homeless people.

The organizations have been replaced with new community groups embracing the concept of permanent housing for the homeless without preconditions for acceptance.

The lawmakers want Carson to end HUD funding guidelines that "punish programs that prioritize work, education and sobriety."

But HUD is at loggerheads over how it should respond. HUD says it will respond to the lawmakers, but when is in question. With Carson having only a minimal hand in the department's operations and Senate confirmation of his chief deputy nominee Pamela Patenaude still days away, there is no firm hand on the department's day-to-day activities.

**Info:** See the House letter to Carson at [www.cdpublications.com/docs/9220](http://www.cdpublications.com/docs/9220) and the Housing First program details at [www.cdpublications.com/docs/9221](http://www.cdpublications.com/docs/9221)