



EnVision Centers Bloat Bureaucracy

EnVision Centers, HUD Secretary Ben Carson's first program initiative and part of the Trump administration's FY 2019 budget request, may not get the congressional greeting Carson expects. The proposed demonstration program would create a mammoth new bureaucracy at HUD that would duplicate most of what HUD does now.

Carson sees EnVision as a one-stop resource designed to wean tenants from government-subsidized housing. The centers would be located at or near public housing authorities and PHAs would bear the main brunt of administration.

Carson views the proposal as several centralized hubs serving as incubators for the initiative's four key pillars of self-sufficiency: character and leadership, educational advancement, economic empowerment, and health and wellness. Critics see it as a massive feel-good duplication of current resources administered by a new multi-layered bureaucracy. The concept is receiving low marks from a variety of sources providing HUD with comments and views regarding its future.

EnVision is supposed to be cost-neutral with funding derived from existing HUD programs, but organizations like the Public Housing Authorities Directors Association, which represents the bulk of the country's 3,300 PHAs, contend the cost would starve other programs already on a fiscal diet after several years of budget reductions.

"The Association questions the cost of this endeavor and doubts that it will be cost neutral," PHADA says. "PHADA would like to state clearly, that it is not supportive of transferring funds from vital, drastically underfunded programs like public housing or the Housing Choice Voucher program to support untested boutique demonstrations."

Noting that HUD is pressuring PHAs to publicly support the concept, PHADA questions how there can be a commitment if PHAs are "without any understanding whatsoever of what record keeping will be required or what they will be monitored, measured, and evaluated."

EnVision would compete with established programs including Moving to Work, Family Self-Sufficiency, and JobsPlus. PHADA suggests, "HUD should focus more on expanding outcome-oriented, scientifically proven interventions."

Info: See the EnVision description at www.hud.gov/envisioncenters and the PHADA comments at www.cdpublications.com/docs/9417