

Baltimore Regional
Housing Campaign

NEW CHOICES

for all
families & children

11/22/2013

Dear Secretary Skinner:

I write as counsel to the Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign (BRHC). The BRHC noted with great concern the action of the Baltimore County Council in passing Resolution 114-13, Disapproval of Application -- MD Department of Housing and Community Development --- Homes at McCormick, Townhomes, as well as the comments of certain council members in support of the resolution. We urge you, Mr. Secretary, to intervene with Baltimore County and to counsel reconsideration of this unfortunate decision.

The Homes for McCormick project would be the first LIHTC housing for families to be constructed in Baltimore County since 1999, and only the second since the inception of the LIHTC program. Family affordable housing is much needed in Baltimore County, as documented in the County's housing plans and the Baltimore County Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, published in 2012.

This unfortunate action illustrates the fair housing problems inherent in the local veto, compounded by the failure of the local veto process adopted by DHCD in the 2013 Qualified Allocation Plan and Multifamily Financing Guide to include any review criteria to examine whether a local resolution of disapproval is grounded in discrimination. In our written and oral comments during the QAP revision process, BRHC and other stakeholders anticipated these problems, and urged the Department to exercise its authority to eliminate the local veto altogether.

This particular decision, if sustained, will certainly have a disparate impact on low-income families of color and perpetuate the virtual exclusion of federally assisted housing for families from Baltimore County. If the County refuses to reconsider, we strongly urge the Department to disregard the Resolution, and to refrain from taking any step to rescind the award of LIHTC to the Homes at McCormick project, or to delay its closing. Acquiescence in, or approval of, the County's discriminatory action would make the Department complicit in that action.

Barbara Samuels

The Baltimore Regional Housing Campaign