

Ohio Democrats warn HUD office closures would harm vulnerable populations

By **Sabrina Eaton**
Cleveland.com

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Democrats in Ohio's congressional delegation last week warned U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Scott Turner that closing or downsizing its offices in Ohio would "disproportionately harm vulnerable populations."

Spurred by [published reports](#) that HUD plans to shutter dozens of its field offices across the nation, Ohio's five Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives [sent a letter to Turner last week](#) arguing for preservation of its two Ohio offices, which are located in Cleveland and Columbus.

"The dismantling of HUD's field presence weakens direct support to state and local governments, housing authorities, and community organizations that depend on federal assistance to address homelessness, housing affordability, and fair housing enforcement," their letter said.

HUD says it is still examining potential closures.

"HUD has not announced any field office closures," said HUD spokesperson Kasey Lovett. "To be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, HUD is exploring consolidation while ensuring service to the American people remains the priority."

Cleveland.com reached out to the offices of U.S. Sens. Bernie Moreno, a Westlake Republican, and Jon Husted, a Columbus area Republican, about the closure. Moreno's sent Lovett's statement. Neither office offered additional comment. [Bloomberg News reported](#) that Trump administration plans to close all HUD field offices in 34 states, including Ohio, and to drastically reduce staffing at the Federal Housing Administration.

The letter from Shontel Brown of Warrensville Heights, Joyce Beatty of Columbus, Emilia Sykes of Akron, Marcy Kaptur of Toledo and Greg Landsman of Cincinnati says HUD must remain a fully staffed and functioning agency "at a time when the

cost of housing continues to rise, homelessness has reached historic levels, and communities face increasing economic uncertainty.”

It says Ohio faces a shortage of 264,083 rental homes that are affordable and available to extremely low income households.

The Congress members noted that HUD is statutorily required to maintain at least one field office in each state to process loan and mortgage insurance applications. The letter said HUD is also required to carry out and publish a cost-benefit analysis before implementing a plan to reorganize any field offices.

“At a time when the cost of housing continues to rise, homelessness has reached historic levels, and communities face increasing economic uncertainty, HUD must remain a fully staffed and functioning agency,” the letter said. “The closure of field offices and mass staff reductions will create service gaps that disproportionately harm vulnerable populations, including low-income families, seniors, and people with disabilities.”

A news release from Brown says HUD Field Offices help enforce fair housing policies, respond to local housing crises, and promote access to affordable and safe housing for hard working Americans.

In addition to underwriting mortgage loans, addressing fair housing claims, and providing guidance to landlords, tenants, and municipalities, it says the Cleveland and Columbus Field Offices manage and distribute the millions of dollars in federal funds that HUD sends to Ohio annually.

It says more than 422,000 Ohioans - 71% of whom are seniors, children, or people with disabilities - rely on federal rental assistance to afford housing.

“HUD staff carry out the bipartisan laws that Congress enacted to fight homelessness, housing discrimination, and make the American Dream a reality for more Americans,” said a statement from Amy Riegel, Executive Director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO). “Without enough personnel to implement these laws, they become broken promises, and more people will lose their housing and wind up homeless. HUD has opportunities for improvement, but recklessly gutting the agency harms a lot of people who are just trying to keep a roof over their heads.”