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*President and
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Hon. Mitch McConnell, Maj. Leader
U.S. Senate
S230 US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Mike Crapo, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Banking
Housing & Urban Affairs
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Charles Schumer, Min. Leader
U.S. Senate
S221 US Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Sherrod Brown, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Banking
Housing & Urban Affairs
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

January 11, 2017

**RE: BEN CARSON'S NOMINATION TO SERVE AS SECRETARY OF THE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Chairman Crapo, and Senator
Brown:**

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that was formed in 1963 at the request of President John F. Kennedy to involve the private bar in providing legal services to address racial discrimination. The principal mission of the Lawyers' Committee is to secure, through the rule of law, equal justice under law, including working with communities across the nation to combat and seek to remediate discriminatory housing practices. We are pleased to present our views to the U.S. Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee regarding the nomination of Dr. Ben Carson for Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is tasked with promoting fair housing and creating affordable and inclusive communities. The actions of the department have immense consequences for communities of color and for renters, homeowners, and neighborhoods across the country generally. Fair housing is crucial to wellbeing of all for when Americans are denied equal access to housing, it reduces the availability of good jobs, quality education, safe streets, and a clean and healthy environment, all of which are central to the American Dream. Whoever leads HUD must have relevant experience and a strong commitment to ensuring that all Americans have meaningful access to decent, safe, and affordable housing. A strong and vigorous HUD, led by a competent Secretary committed to its mission, is critical to ensuring that dream is realized.



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We are deeply concerned by the nomination of Dr. Ben Carson to serve as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Dr. Carson lacks any experience in housing policy or community development. Moreover, he has no experience running an executive agency or serving in government. Recently, he himself noted this lack of experience when he said that he would be like a “fish out of water” if he were to join the cabinet. This raises serious questions about his qualifications for the position of HUD Secretary.

Dr. Carson’s record also raises deep concerns about his commitment to fair housing. He has criticized the Supreme Court’s landmark decision affirming that disparate impact claims may be brought under the Fair Housing Act. He has expressed opposition to HUD’s Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, which requires communities to take proactive measures to overcome the legacy of residential segregation, referring to it as “mandated social-engineering.” Last year, he went so far as to criticize a HUD agreement resolving a fair housing complaint as indicative of “what you see in communist countries.” Such remarks demonstrate why Dr. Carson must be made to explain his vision for HUD and how he would approach the critical task of enforcing the nation’s fair housing laws.

Our country has made enormous progress in breaking down barriers to fair housing, but there is still much more work that needs to be done. HUD plays a vitally important role in fighting housing discrimination and strengthening communities. At this critical time for civil rights, our nation must have a HUD secretary who will support full and robust enforcement of the Fair Housing Act, foster equitable housing development, and promote fair housing choice.”

For these reasons, the Lawyers’ Committee urges members of the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee to examine in depth the record of Dr. Carson and his fitness and preparedness to serve as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Kristen Clarke
President and Executive Director
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law