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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

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March 8, 2018

Acting Inspector General Helen Albert  
Department of Housing and Urban Development  
451 7<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20410

Inspector General Phyllis Fong  
Department of Agriculture  
12<sup>th</sup> and Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Room 117-W  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Inspector General Michael Missal  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20420

Inspector General Eric M. Thorson  
Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Inspectors General Albert, Fong, Missal, and Thorson:

I am writing to request your assistance in evaluating the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of federal expenditures on housing assistance programs.

Federal involvement in providing housing assistance dates back to the 1930s, with the federal government promoting the construction of low-rent public housing for qualified families and supporting the mortgage market through the Federal Housing Administration and the government-sponsored enterprises. Over time, federal involvement in housing assistance has expanded into a complicated maze of programs and financing tools through which billions of dollars are spent each year. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported on this problem in August 2012, finding that “twenty different entities administered 160 programs, tax expenditures, and other tools that supported homeownership and rental housing ...” According to GAO, “Multiple agencies administer programs that serve the same purpose, illustrating the fragmentation of homeownership and rental housing programs.”

One of GAO’s recommendations, which remains open, is for officials within the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Treasury, Agriculture, and Veterans Affairs to

evaluate and report on the specific opportunities for consolidating similar housing programs, including those that would require statutory changes. Last year, GAO noted a lack of information “on the areas where specific statutory changes are needed to help mitigate overlap and fragmentation and decrease costs.”

To help bridge this information gap and better serve the public, I request that your offices review the federal government’s housing assistance programs and expenditures and provide a written evaluation that includes an analysis of specific areas of overlap, duplication, or fragmentation and recommendations for areas for consolidation. This evaluation should build off of the previously mentioned work of GAO and should include, as appropriate, the analysis and recommendations of other Inspectors General whose departments or agencies provide housing assistance. In addition, please include in the evaluation the five-year funding history for those programs identified as overlapping, duplicative, or fragmented.

As a former small business owner and an accountant, I know that a more consolidated and streamlined government best serves both those who need these services and those who help pay for them. Reforms done right can lead to less money going to overhead costs and more to providing actual assistance to those Americans most in need.

In order to help inform the fiscal year 2019 budget and appropriations cycle, I request that the results of the evaluation be provided in writing to the Committee as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Paul Vinovich, Chief Counsel for the Senate Budget Committee, at 202-224-0642.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael B. Enzi". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Michael B. Enzi  
Chairman  
Committee on the Budget