



USU

Coalition of
Urban Serving Universities

ASSOCIATION OF
PUBLIC AND
LAND-GRANT
UNIVERSITIES



September 7, 2010

The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
Chairman
Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs Com.
U.S. Senate
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs Com.
U.S. Senate
534 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Dodd and Ranking Member Shelby:

The Livable Communities Act of 2010 (S. 1619), as voted out of the Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs Committee on August 3, 2010, presents significant opportunities to strengthen and expand the economic sustainability of metropolitan regions. We are writing in support of the overall purpose of the bill and to point out a potential problem area that needs to be addressed to avoid perpetuating a piecemeal approach to sustaining our communities in the 21st century.

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (A·P·L·U) and the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) urge you to expand the definition of an eligible entity for a Comprehensive Planning Grant Program (SEC. 7) under S. 1619 to include institutions of higher education.

A·P·L·U is the nation's oldest higher education association, and USU is a network of public urban research universities that represents every region of our country. Together these two organizations recently launched a new alliance called the Commission on Urban Initiatives (CUI). CUI is focused on harnessing the power of universities and their partners to restore economic prosperity and improve the quality of life of residents of urban and metro regions. Our members work closely with leaders in their home states and in Washington, D.C., to advocate for policies and practices that leverage the individual and collective impact of our anchor institutions.

One of these practices is the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) \$100 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program. Higher education institutions possess a broad range of skills and resources—intellectual, human, technological, and social—to engage in urban opportunities. They play active roles in shaping the future of our cities and regions, as, unlike corporate headquarters, they cannot pick up and leave a community or region when hardships occur. HUD recognizes the important impact institutions of higher education have upon their communities by requiring a “nonprofit organization, foundation, or educational institution” to be included as part of the consortium that applies for a Planning Grant. HUD also allows any entity that is part of the consortium to be the lead applicant.

We are pleased that a number of our universities are planning to apply as part of a consortium for a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. *However*, we are deeply concerned that S. 1619, as voted out of the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, does not reflect the current eligibility conditions of HUD's grant program. Specifically, SEC. 7 of the bill only considers the following entities to be eligible for the consortium: local government, metropolitan planning organization, rural planning organization, regional council, state, or Indian tribe. As it is currently drafted, S. 1619 appears to prohibit our institutions of higher education from applying for future Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grants.

We strongly urge the Committee to continue the comprehensive and inclusive policy of HUD and amend S. 1619 to allow institutions of higher education to participate in this grant program as a partner in the consortium. This change would be consistent with the Regeneration Planning Grant Demonstration Program (SEC. 9) in the bill, which allows universities and colleges to participate as a partner.

S. 1619 creates better places to live by strengthening and expanding the economic viability and sustainability where our member institutions are located. We look forward to working with you and members of the Committee in incorporating our recommendation into S. 1619. This recommendation will further strengthen the true intent of the policy.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss this comprehensive and important policy with you at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Peter McPherson
President, A•P•L•U



Nancy L. Zimpher
Chair, USU
Chancellor, State University of New York