FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Overwhelming Majority of Public Housing Professionals Serve Their Communities with Integrity

WASHINGTON, D.C. (June 5, 2012) - As the nation’s oldest and largest professional membership organization serving public housing professionals, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) shares the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD’s) commitment both to transparency and to ensuring that limited federal resources are expended efficiently and responsibly. While well-intentioned, HUD’s recently announced plan – reported by the Associated Press - to impose blanket, rigid pay caps for the hard-working professionals who lead local housing agencies is, unfortunately, an overreach and an example of the kind of heavy-handed federal micromanagement of local affairs that can ultimately lead to more problems than it solves.

Most of the nation’s approximately 4,000 housing authorities are independent special purpose districts or units of government, organized in the same manner as airports, port authorities, and utilities. The executives who lead housing authorities are public servants tasked with the mission of administering programs that meet the basic housing needs of nearly 7 million of the most vulnerable Americans including veterans, the elderly and the disabled, and working poor families with young children, nearly all of whom would be at serious risk of homelessness if not for the critical services that local agencies provide.

The appropriations bill for federal fiscal year 2012 limited the federal contribution that a housing authority can use toward an executive’s salary to $155,000. In fact, according to 2010 data collected by HUD, the vast majority – 97 percent – of housing authority executives earn less than $155,000 in total cash compensation (including salaries and bonuses), and only 21 percent of the highest paid housing authority executives earned more than the median for non-profit executives of similar-sized organizations.

The Associated Press in its coverage of HUD’s announcement highlighted excessive pay packages received in 2010 by subsequently dismissed executives in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Chelsea, Mass. It is important to note that in all three cases, when these excessive compensation packages came to light local housing authority boards exercised local decision-making authority and dealt with the problem expeditiously. Local control works. Any one-size-fits-all federal policy intervention imposed as a result of yesterday’s HUD release would be an overly broad solution in search of a problem.

The overwhelming majority of public housing professionals are responsible stewards of taxpayers’ dollars, and HUD’s data supports this. While NAHRO stands ready to work with HUD and others to uncover those rare instances of waste, fraud, and abuse within the federal housing programs our members administer, the public should feel confident that limited dollars are currently being used efficiently and responsibly by hardworking public servants to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing at the local level for our nation’s most vulnerable families and individuals.
Housing Authority Facts:

- 3,148 housing authorities own federally subsidized public housing. 1,512 of these agencies also administer the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, while another 923 housing authorities administer Section 8 voucher programs but do not own public housing units.
- In total, housing authorities own and administer approximately 1.2 million units of public housing, serving over 2.1 million people.
- Through their administration of the Housing Choice Voucher program, housing authorities serve an additional 1.9 million households, providing housing assistance for over 4.6 million people.

About NAHRO:

Based in Washington, DC, the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials is a professional membership organization comprising approximately 23,000 housing and community development agencies and officials throughout the United States who administer a variety of affordable housing and community development programs at the local level. NAHRO is committed to upholding at all times the highest standards of ethical conduct and works aggressively to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse in the administration of federal programs. NAHRO members are expected to adhere to our Code of Professional Conduct, which requires them to perform work responsibilities with the highest degree of integrity and professionalism. NAHRO’s Board of Ethics and Credentialing Trustees investigates violations of our Code of Professional Conduct and takes appropriate action. Additionally, NAHRO’s professional development programs provide our members with the opportunity to earn certifications that signify they have met the industry’s highest standards of professionalism and ethical behavior.

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