**September 30, 2021**

**Secretary Marcia L. Fudge**

U.S. Department of

Housing and Urban Development

451 7th Street, S.W.

Washington, DC 20410

**RE: Urgent Need to Reduce Radon Danger to Residents of Federal Public Housing**

Dear Madame Secretary:

I am writing you today from Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) to urge you to take immediate action on a serious matter of public health.

As you know, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Office of Inspector General (IG) found in a report issued earlier this year that these three program offices do not have consistent radon policies. [Final Report – HUD Program Offices’ Policies and Approaches for Radon, 2020-OE-0003; [2020-OE-0003.pdf (hudoig.gov)](https://www.hudoig.gov/sites/default/files/2021-04/2020-OE-0003.pdf)].

The IG undertook this review after reports from media outlets, which based upon their sampling, found widespread dangerous levels of radon in public housing units across the country, but these outlets could not persuade the relevant HUD divisions to take corrective action.

Following its review, the IG found that only the Office of Multifamily Housing has a radon policy includes radon testing and mitigation requirements. It further found that Public and Indian Housing (PIH) has a policy that encourages but does not require public housing agencies (PHA) to test for radon and to mitigate excessive radon levels. The IG also concluded that Community Planning and Development (CPD) does not have a radon policy.

We are writing to request that you take steps to implement the IG’s two key recommendations:

1. Take immediate steps to ensure that all HUD-financed housing properties are free of radioactive substances where it could affect the health and safety of occupants or conflict with the intended use of the property; and
2. Fulfill the more than 30-year-old statutory mandate to “Develop a departmental policy for dealing with radon contamination…to ensure that housing occupants are not exposed to hazardous levels of radon…[with] programs for education, research, testing, and mitigation of radon hazards in housing”, as required by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Amendments Act of 1988 [ 42 U.S. Code § 11301 et seq].

In recommending these corrective actions, the IG concluded that “Due to the danger that prolonged radon exposure can pose to residents, it is critical for HUD to act.” We agree with the urgency expressed by the IG.

To date, however, your agency has not taken the steps identified by the IG. Although HUD agreed with the IG recommendations, we are receiving reports from HUD employees that certain managers are resisting the changes that make it appear they had not been doing their jobs.

As I am sure you realize, this is a significant public health concern. The two HUD public housing programs that do not require radon testing affect substantial populations:

* PIH provides housing assistance to approximately 1 million households living in public housing units, managed by approximately 2,890 local PHAs; and
* CPD’s HOME Investment Partnerships Program provides the largest block grants to eligible states and local governments for developing affordable housing. Since 1992, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program has completed approximately 526,000 rental units and 254,000 property rehabilitations.

As you also know, the urgency for corrective action is also growing. The average length of stay in assisted housing for a typical household is increasing. Specifically, for households ending participation in 2015, the average length of stay was 6 years and generally rising. This trend increases residents’ lifetime risk for developing radon-induced lung cancer if elevated radon levels are present in those households.

Thank you for your attention to this request. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

Tim Whitehouse

Executive Director

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)