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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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March 24, 2016

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies bill, I encourage you to include language that will assist local communities in their efforts to support substance-abuse recovery facilities and their associated “sober living environments.”

In recent years, such living arrangements have proliferated in Arizona and particularly in Yavapai County. Arizona takes pride in its reputation as a first-class destination for medical, behavioral, and substance abuse recovery facilities. This niche industry brings many benefits to our state, including jobs and economic diversity. But it also brings unique challenges as well, particularly to small and medium-sized communities that have become saturated with transitional housing for those recovering from substance abuse. Prescott, Arizona, for example, is a community of just 40,000 residents, but has more than 160 known recovery housing units among its neighborhoods.

Access to housing for vulnerable populations is protected by multiple federal statutes including the Fair Housing Act, the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act. The rights guaranteed by these laws are important and must be protected. But local communities must also be empowered with the resources necessary to balance the high level of care recovering individuals deserve while still being able to preserve the quality of life for all residents in surrounding neighborhoods.

Accordingly, we urge you to include language that directs the Department of Health and Human Services, in cooperation with the Department of the Housing and Urban Development, to work with local communities, counties, and state governments to establish best practices and guidelines for proper oversight of these transitional and recovery housing arrangements.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.". The signature is stylized and includes a large, looped initial "P" on the left side.

Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress