

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



CATHARINE M. YOUNG
SENATOR
57TH DISTRICT

February 15, 2017

CHAIR
FINANCE

STANDING COMMITTEES
HOUSING
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Mr. William O. Dawson III, MPA
Director of Grant Evaluation
Office of Native American Programs – Eastern Woodlands
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
77 W. Jackson Blvd
Room 2410
Chicago, Illinois 60604-3507

Dear Director Dawson,

I am writing today in reference to an issue of great importance that was recently brought to my attention regarding the ongoing federal funding for the Seneca Nation Housing Authority's Elderly Housing Complex and the eviction of 10 elderly residents.

As you may know, the City of Salamanca, where the Seneca Nation Housing Authority's complex is located, is the only city in the United States that lies almost completely on a Native American Reservation. This unique designation results in a tremendous partnership between natives and non-natives, and the city government and Tribal Council.

It has come to my attention that an audit by your office performed in 2015 resulted in findings that the Seneca Housing Authority does not comply with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) guidelines related to non-natives residing in tribal housing. Further, it is my understanding that HUD could impose fines up to \$500,000 because of the use of Native American housing by 12 non-natives.

As you may also be aware, 10 non-Senecas now currently reside in the housing complex located at 44 Seneca Street in the City of Salamanca, which was dedicated in November 1981. According to media reports and local officials, these residents range from a woman in her 90s, who has lived at the complex for nearly 30 years, to a resident in her 70s who has been a resident for four years. At the end of 2016, the Seneca Nation Housing Authority gave all non-native residents at the complex eviction notices, specifying that they must vacate their homes by May 31, 2017. This was done in response to the threat of fines and loss of federal funding put forward by your office.

As the former chair of the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Housing, I know that housing is a compelling issue. Everyone needs a decent place to live. Rural communities, such as the ones I represent, often lack affordable housing opportunities, especially for seniors who are living on limited, fixed incomes.

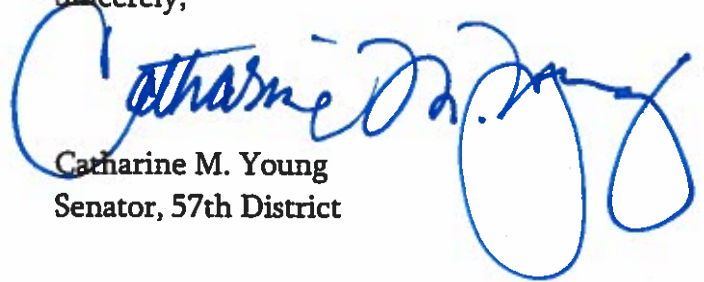
It is my understanding that the Seneca Nation and the City of Salamanca are working together to find long-term accommodations for the remaining 10 non-natives. Regrettably, most of the available housing on the list is outside of Salamanca and Cattaraugus County. Such a relocation would impose what would be a stressful and complicating hardship to these vulnerable seniors.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you consider grandfathering in the 10 non-native residents who currently reside at the Elderly Housing Complex, and that the Seneca Housing Authority not be held financially accountable for these long-standing residents remaining in their existing housing accommodations.

I am grateful for this chance to personally and strongly attest to the needs of these residents, who, if evicted, would be moved away from their community and family. It is my sincere hope that you will view this matter as the compelling issue it is and take every step you can to preserve the existing housing arrangement.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request. Please accept my best wishes and feel free to contact, me should you have any questions or concerns in regard to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Catharine M. Young". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Catharine M. Young
Senator, 57th District

CMY/bd