

Senator Brooke Statement

Good Morning:

Thank you for this great honor, and for inviting me to be a part of your special dedication ceremony. I deeply regret that I could not join you today. However, I sincerely appreciate having my name associated with an organization that has played such an important role in the creation of vibrant, diverse communities.

When President Lyndon Johnson established the Department of Housing and Urban Development in September 1965 as part of his Great Society, he envisioned an agency that would be on the forefront of the battle to eliminate poverty and end racial inequity. President Johnson understood that if America were to reach its full potential, it could not afford to treat certain segments of the nation's population differently.

I have always believed, and still believe, that the insidious cluster of urban problems, including poor schools and a lack of jobs and opportunity, can be eased by an end to discrimination in housing. I believe that open housing can help break education and employment barriers and show that the ghetto is not an immutable institution in America.

Some forty years ago I was proud to introduce and co-sponsor the 1968 Fair Housing Act with my friend and colleague on the Senate Banking and Currency Committee, the indomitable Democratic Senator Walter Mondale of Minnesota. Passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act did not come easy. After early rejection by the White House and fierce opposition from both sides of the aisle, with an unheard of four cloture votes, the measure was passed because of the courage, conviction and perseverance of Walter Mondale, Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois, Republican Representative John Anderson of Illinois and Republican Senator Jack Miller of Iowa, and many other stalwart members of Congress. What has since come to be regarded as landmark legislation was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on April 11, 1968.

By diligently enforcing the Fair Housing Act, HUD affirms the nation's commitment to protecting the rights of anyone who faces discrimination because of their race, color, nationality, religion, sex, familial status, or disability.

We know that America still has work to do before there is true equality for all, but the Department of Housing and Urban Development has every reason to be proud of its record of energizing communities, empowering individuals, and establishing justice as the standard by which every great society should be measured.

Again, thank you for honoring me in this way, and I congratulate HUD on all it is doing to make America a better place. Through your numerous programs and initiatives that benefit every segment of our society, you demonstrate just how unshakeable our values are, how strong our resolve is, and how deep our dedication is to the ideals of justice and equality.