



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to Housing Counseling Today!

2023 is off to a great start and I whole heartedly believe that this year it going to be a transformative year for the housing counseling industry. Our collective efforts to ensure a robust recovery from the pandemic and our critical role in expanding access to affordable housing and sustainable homeownership are making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. In addition, our laser focus on addressing housing equity goes hand-in-hand with our goal to the expand best in class culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services. When all of this is coupled with the impact of HUD housing counselor-certification, I believe we are elevating our profession to new heights.

I have often commented at speaking engagements that you can feel the energy, excitement, and momentum among housing counseling industry attendees as our impact as trusted advisors continues to grow in both the real estate and housing finance communities. Within HUD, we feel the enthusiasm too, and it is manifested in so many ways – from working with the HUD Innovation Lab to apply human centered design to our Minority Serving Institution Partnership Initiative – to convening focus groups and conducting market research in preparation for launching our multi-year housing counseling awareness campaign later this year.

Earlier this month, we published our long-awaited proposed rule outlining housing counselor certification requirements for housing counseling conducted in connection with the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) and the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) programs. We very much welcome public comment on this proposal and look forward to conducting a Tribal Consultation session with Tribal leaders after the 60-day comment period closes. Our team at HUD is also working to quickly

finalize the supplemental Comprehensive Housing Counseling Notice of Funding Opportunity (CNOFO), which will allow those agencies that did not receive funding under the original CNOFO to apply for these funds. New housing counseling initiatives that celebrate housing equity, homeownership and pre and post purchase counseling and innovative responses to natural disasters are also under active consideration. And last, we're already planning for our virtual Housing Counseling Community Conference in September & in person regional conferences! We'll communicate more information about the conference in the coming months.

While we continue to enhance the programmatic and funding components of our programs, we place equal emphasis on modernizing and streamlining how housing counseling services are delivered, including much needed updates to our requirements so they reflect today's professional practice and oversight standards. This also includes a collaboration with NeighborWorks America and our industry partners, where we will look forward to engaging with you and other thought leaders to facilitate discussions to update industry best practices.

There is no question that the past two years have been challenging for each of us and the communities that we serve due to the pandemic and the resulting financial impact on households. The Office of Housing Counseling professional staff and I look forward to engaging with you to realize our shared vision to assist individuals and families to obtain, sustain and improve their housing and to support our national network of HUD-approved counseling agencies.

Thank you for all that you do to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors. Please reach out to me if I can be of assistance, and let's work together to make sure that 2023 is truly a transformative year and to ensure that everyone in this nation has a place to call home.

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