

September 23, 2021

The Honorable Marcia Fudge
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th St S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

The Honorable Denis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretaries Fudge, McDonough, and Vilsack:

On behalf of the clients and communities we represent, we urge HUD, VA, and USDA to extend the September 30, 2021 deadline for borrowers to start forbearance plans due to COVID-19 hardships. The agencies should not prematurely end access to forbearance as the Delta variant rages across the nation.

When the federal agencies announced their current deadline for accessing forbearance in June of 2021, COVID-19 case counts were very low. COVID-19 cases are now over ten times higher than they were in June without signs of slowing. The Labor Department's August employment report also reflects a slowdown in job creation.

Given the current state of COVID-19 cases, HUD, VA, and USDA borrowers must continue to have access to forbearance to address pandemic-related hardships. Borrowers who face COVID-19 hardships now should not be in a worse position than those who faced hardship earlier in the pandemic.

Notably, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are not imposing a September 30, 2021 deadline for borrowers to access COVID-19 forbearance. Instead, they allow borrowers to access twelve months of forbearance whenever they face COVID-19 hardships.

We urge HUD, USDA, and VA to respond to the current state of the pandemic and extend the deadline for borrowers to access initial forbearance plans beyond September 30, 2021.

Sincerely,

Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund
Center for Community Progress
Center for Responsible Lending
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia (PA)
Connecticut Fair Housing Center
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of America
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Inc. (NY)
Empire Justice Center (NY)
Financial Protection Law Center (NC)
The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland (OH)
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia
Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, LLC
Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (NY)
MICAHA- Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MN)
Mountain State Justice, Inc. (WV)
National Association of Consumer Advocates
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Housing Law Project
National Urban League
North Carolina Justice Center
Ohio Poverty Law Center
Prosperity Now
Public Counsel
Vermont Legal Aid
Woodstock Institute