

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1501

May 8, 2024

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing & Urban Development,
& Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations,
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing & Urban Development,
& Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Womack and Ranking Member Quigley:

As you craft the fiscal year 2025 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, & Related Agencies Appropriations bill, I respectfully request the inclusion of \$2,500,000 for the North Iowa Corridor Workforce Housing Initiative as a community project funding request through the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant Economic Development Initiative account. The intended recipient is Cerro Gordo County, located at 220 N. Washington Ave, Mason City, Iowa 50401.

This project would support Cerro Gordo County, Iowa, in addressing the need for quality housing attainable by the average workforce in the community. Cerro Gordo has identified a lack of accessible housing for the workforce for over a decade. This funding would allow the county to develop the needed attainable housing units for expanding businesses and attracting new workers to the area. This includes the acquisition of sites and blighted properties, housing moving and relocation, and housing rehabilitation and reconstruction. This investment would allow for the development of housing units and first-time buyer single-family homes at a price accessible for the average member of the workforce in the community.

Following devastating flooding events in 2008 and 2009, the community lost almost 200 housing units, and new construction did not begin to replace this loss for over a decade. At the same time, demand for housing continued to grow, creating pricing pressures on low- and moderate-housing units. In 2018, the county-wide Vision North Iowa produced a community and economic development strategic plan in which over 1,300 residents participated; the lack of quality, accessible housing was one of the primary items identified across the county. While Mason City – the largest city in Cerro Gordo County – completed a housing initiative in 2023, there remains

a shortage of over 500 housing units to meet the current workforce demands. The countywide plan adopted recently sets a goal to develop or improve up to 1,000 housing units by 2030.

The successes experienced by the business community and the key quality-of-life efforts the Cities are making are continuing to place increased pressure on the market due to the lack of housing. Price inflation has continued to squeeze middle- and lower-income workers out of the market, making it difficult for new teachers, nurses, police officers, laborers, and entry-level workers. This project would aid the county's initiative in working with several local employers to identify potential houses or projects to provide homes for new employees, young professionals, and working families in the community.

The significant housing shortage is a well-known problem across the country but is particularly significant in smaller communities in northeast Iowa. This investment would help alleviate this need and solve a major problem for individuals needing quality housing, employers wanting to attract workers, and the local community's long-term success by improving the quality of neighborhoods and communities.

I strongly urge the Committee to include this community project funding request in the FY25 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, & Related Agencies Appropriations bill. I appreciate your consideration of this project.

Sincerely,



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress
Committee on Appropriations