



May 1, 2025

U.S. House of Representatives
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development
The Honorable Steve Womack, Chair
The Honorable James Clyburn, Ranking Member

FY 2026 Written Testimony for the Hearing Record

Dear Chair Womack and Ranking Member Clyburn:

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) represents more than 100,000 architects and design professionals across the country. For nearly 170 years, AIA has been dedicated to protecting the public's health, safety, and welfare, and to enhancing quality of life through thoughtful design of the built environment. At the heart of this mission is a strong commitment to addressing the nation's affordable housing needs—ensuring that housing is not only accessible and equitable, but also safe, resilient, and designed to meet the evolving needs of communities now and in the future.

AIA respectfully submits the following recommendations for appropriations in the FY 2026 Homeland Security for your consideration.

\$2.5 billion for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program

For over three decades, the HOME Investment Partnerships Program has been a vital tool for states and localities to create and preserve affordable housing. As the largest federal block grant program dedicated exclusively to affordable housing, HOME provides flexible funding to build, rehabilitate, and support housing for low-income families. Funds are allocated by formula—60% to localities and 40% to states—and jurisdictions must contribute a 25% match and submit strategic housing plans tailored to community needs. HOME has supported over 1.33 million housing units and provided rental assistance to more than 400,000 families. Every \$1 in HOME funding leverages an additional \$4.52 in public and private investment.

As architects committed to improving lives through the built environment, AIA urges Congress to restore HOME funding to at least \$2.5 billion in FY 2025 to help communities meet the growing demand for safe, affordable, and resilient housing.

\$4.2 billion for the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

Since 1974, CDBG has been a main source of federal support to improve housing, infrastructure, public services, and economic opportunity—particularly for low- and moderate-income Americans. Despite its proven impact and expanded reach, CDBG funding has been cut by over \$1 billion since its peak in FY 1995, even as it now serves nearly 50% more communities. The program provides essential flexible resources to more than 1,200 communities annually, allowing local governments to invest in affordable housing, upgrade aging infrastructure, support small businesses, and deliver critical services ranging from job training to elder care. AIA strongly supports funding CDBG at \$4.2

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billion to ensure communities of all sizes can continue addressing urgent local needs through thoughtful, inclusive, and resilient development.

\$400 million for the Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes (OLHCHH) including \$140 million for Healthy Homes Program Grants

OLHCHH works to improve housing conditions by identifying hazards and addressing threats like mold, radon, unsafe water, and poor indoor air quality—conditions that disproportionately impact low-income and historically underserved communities. Since 2021, they have awarded more than \$660 million in grants for this purpose to communities across the country.

These grants play a vital role in improving health outcomes and housing quality for low- and moderate-income Americans. They address serious home-based health hazards—including toxic chemicals or building materials, asthma triggers, unsafe drinking water, poor air quality, and structural risks—through targeted built environmental (i.e., architecture and/or engineering) interventions. The grants help to create safer, more affordable, and more climate-resilient housing, while also enhancing energy efficiency and access to critical community facilities, infrastructure, or other building resources such as childcare, schools, health care, and transportation. Through strong partnerships with local governments, nonprofits, and other federal agencies, the program is an important part of HUD’s efforts to use housing as a platform for better health outcomes.

Architects are uniquely qualified to lead project design and implementation of healthy homes as they are specifically trained in the health, safety, and general welfare aspects of their projects. The removal of toxic elements as identified above is basic to human habitation in the creation of safer living conditions. However, harm reduction is more than a matter of “degrees of less bad.” It must acknowledge the positive and generative aspects of wellbeing and health, which are also within the purview of architects through appropriate system and material selection, building orientation, daylighting, access to natural views, etc. Built-environmental research demonstrates myriad examples of this. We also assert that architects should be the arbiters of these selections and be eligible to be the prime recipients and administrators of these grants.

While we strongly oppose any proposed cuts or rescissions to these vital programs and urge Congress to build on recent momentum by fully funding this office and supporting its comprehensive, evidence-based approach to housing and health, we also emphatically urge Congress to consider the greater good created by architects’ applications of built-environments research specifically related to health and wellbeing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.