**Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review of the United States**

**Fourth Video: Lynn Grosso, U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development**

* Hello.  My name is Lynn Grosso, and I’m the Director of Enforcement in the Office of Fair Housing at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.  I’m very glad to participate in this session to address the United States’ efforts related to housing and homelessness.

* Since our last UPR, we’ve continued to support programs to protect individuals from discrimination, to combat homelessness, and to increase affordability and choice in the housing market.

* High housing costs can lead to homelessness and increased inequality. To address this issue, in June 2019, the President established the White House Council on Eliminating Barriers to Affordable Housing to remove the obstacles that impede the production of affordable homes, to boost economic growth, and provide economic mobility for more Americans.

* The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act included the Opportunity Zone tax incentive to encourage affordable housing through privately-funded development and rehabilitation of quality housing stock.

* Each year the United States provides billions of dollars to support rental assistance programs for low-income families.  The nation’s largest rental subsidy program provides financial support for families through housing vouchers to rent homes in the private market.  In 2018, the federal government launched a campaign to encourage more property owners to participate in the program to expand the availability of affordable homes for participating families.

* Beyond these housing affordability actions, federal agencies have addressed homelessness by reducing and treating illicit drug use, expanding mental health resources, and promoting self-sufficiency and local control in homeless assistance programs.

* In October 2020, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (“The Council” or USICH) released an updated strategic plan which focuses on the root causes of homelessness and prioritizes trauma-informed care to prevent and end homelessness.

* Federal funding targeted for homeless assistance has increased every year in the last decade.  In 2020, Congress appropriated over $6.6 billion for these programs.

* These resources support a wide variety of social programs for families who struggle with poverty or health problems that often lead to homelessness.

* The Council has also released guidance on removing barriers to housing and services for individuals with criminal records who are experiencing homelessness.

* In its new strategic plan, the Council has also promoted alternatives to criminalizing people experiencing homelessness, through better partnerships between law enforcement and homeless service organizations,  increased capacity of social work and mental health programs, and reducing recidivism among individuals experiencing homelessness.

* To support these efforts, communities that document steps they are taking to combat the criminalization of homelessness receive priority for federal homelessness grants.
* The United States is committed to minimizing displacement and evictions resulting from strains in the housing market amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

* In accordance with the President’s Executive Order to take all lawful measures to prevent evictions, the federal government invoked its authority to temporarily halt certain foreclosures and evictions through the end of 2020.

* Other measures taken by the U.S. government include federal grants, rental assistance, and technical assistance to prevent evictions and keep people in their homes.

* Finally, I would like to address federal activities to overcome housing discrimination.

* United States federal law makes it illegal to discriminate in the sale or rental of housing based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and familial status.  The federal government investigates complaints of housing discrimination and rigorously enforces these legal protections.

* The United States government has also prioritized the enforcement of federal laws that provide for accessibility in housing to ensure equal access for people with disabilities and further prevent homelessness.

* The United States is committed to ensuring all Americans have access to safe, affordable, quality housing.  Likewise, we remain committed to creating strong, sustainable, inclusive communities for all.  Thank you.