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June 21, 1988

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Children's Defense Fund and the American Association of Retired Persons, we urge you to support the Fair Housing Amendments of 1988 (H.R. 1158), scheduled for House consideration on June 22nd. This legislation will help protect minorities, families, and persons with disabilities from housing discrimination.

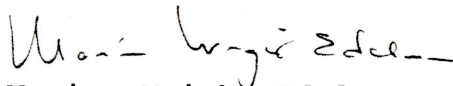
The Fair Housing Amendments Act provides new, urgently needed safeguards for families with children. Currently, housing discrimination against families with children is not prohibited by federal law. H.R. 1158 would prohibit this kind of discrimination, while at the same time protecting the special needs of older persons. H.R. 1158 allows the exclusion of families with children from federally subsidized housing for the elderly, and other housing for older persons that meets certain criteria. This exemption recognizes the legitimate need for special housing and services for older persons, and ensures that these needs will continue to be met.

Housing discrimination against families with children is a pervasive and serious problem which demands immediate federal action. An extensive national study conducted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development found that 75 percent of the rental units surveyed either excluded or restricted children. In most states, families now have little recourse if they believe they have been refused housing because of their children. Even in the 16 states that have enacted statutes prohibiting discrimination against families with children, there are large loopholes and weak enforcement mechanisms.


Of additional importance to both young and old Americans is the added protection the Amendments provide for disabled persons, including a requirement that new housing provide basic access. This will help ensure access to housing for families with a disabled member, and allow more older people to "age in place," reducing unnecessary institutional placements.

A safe and secure home is the cornerstone of a stable family life. We believe that this legislation will help American families provide that stability for young and old alike. We urge you to support H.R. 1158 and to oppose any efforts to weaken the protections afforded to families with children.

Sincerely,



Marian Wright Edelman
President
Children's Defense Fund



Horace B. Deets
Executive Director
AARP