

JOHN CONYERS, JR.
13TH DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

COMMITTEE:
RANKING MEMBER
JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COURTS AND
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE
CONSTITUTION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2213

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2426 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2213
PHONE: 202-225-5126

DETROIT OFFICE:
669 FEDERAL BUILDING
231 WEST LAFAYETTE
DETROIT, MI 48226
PHONE: 313-961-5670

E-MAIL AND WWW:
JOHN.CONYERS@MAIL.HOUSE.GOV
[HTTP://WWW.CONYERS.HOUSE.GOV](http://www.conyers.house.gov)

February 2, 2016

The Honorable Secretary Jacob J. Lew
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Lew,

I write to express my profound gratitude for your exemplary efforts to secure resources for communities that were most impacted by the Great Recession, including my State of Michigan and hometown of Detroit.

I am particularly grateful for your recent cooperation with members of the Michigan Congressional delegation to secure as much as \$2 billion in additional funding for the Hardest Hit Fund.

As you determine a process for allocating the funds to states in the Hardest Hit Fund program, I respectfully ask that you keep in mind both the ongoing economic challenges Michigan faces as a result of the Great Recession, as well as the expeditious manner that Hardest Hit Fund resources have been disbursed in our state.

Thanks to assistance from the Hardest Hit Fund program, Michigan is leading the nation in blight removal efforts. As of January 17, Michigan's Blight Elimination Program had successfully demolished 8,022 blighted properties, the most of any state in the country. And aside from California (which has a population four times greater than ours), Michigan has used the Hardest Hit Funds to assist the greatest number of homeowners of any state, surpassing 29,798 in January 2015.

This meaningful accomplishment is partially due to Michigan's success in keeping administrative expenses to a minimum, which allows more funds to go to those who need them most. Currently, overhead expenses for the Step Forward Michigan program that distributes Hardest Hit Fund resources are at 8.3 percent, and they have consistently been under 10 percent.

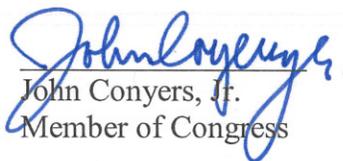
Despite these efforts, however, Michigan continues to face disproportionate economic challenges resulting from the Great Recession that the Hardest Hit Fund is intended to mitigate. Unemployment and underemployment continues to plague many parts of the state. As of November 2015, 37 of Michigan's 83 counties still have unemployment rates that are higher than the national average, with many urban and rural pockets faring far worse. In addition, since

2007, nearly 300,000 Michigan workers have given up looking for a job. The unemployment rate would be twice its current level if they were still seeking employment.

The drop in housing prices continues to cause hardship for many Michigan families. According to estimates, after the collapse of the housing bubble, home values in Detroit fell more than 50 percent from their peak in late 2005, and had only recovered about 5 percent from their trough as of mid-2015. As a result, according to Wayne County Treasurer's Office, approximately 60,000 of Wayne County residents are facing foreclosure this year due to overdue property taxes. The Hardest Hit Fund helped more than 6,000 families facing property tax foreclosure stay in their homes last year. Without a substantial infusion of funds, thousands of families facing property tax foreclosure will unnecessarily lose their homes this year. This will cause needless suffering while adding to the thousands of blighted structures that still need to be remediated.

Even with your outstanding efforts to aid Michigan recovery, we still have a long way to go to reverse the harm done to Michigan families by the economic downturn. I applaud your continuing efforts to help rebuild Michigan's economy, and I greatly look forward to working together to improve the quality of life of the people of Michigan.

Sincerely,


John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress