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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS

BUILDERS OFFER CONGRESS RECOMMENDATIONS ON MAKING AFFORDABLE HOUSING GREEN

June 11, 2008 - The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) today testified before Congress on ways to improve sustainability and energy efficiency in housing while simultaneously supporting housing affordability.

Jerry Howard, NAHB executive vice president and CEO, spoke at a House Financial Services Committee hearing on H.R. 6078, the Green Resources for Energy Efficient Neighborhood Act of 2008, also known as the GREEN Act.

“Because federal housing programs are such a critical component of the nation’s housing system, NAHB believes that it is important to ensure that the incorporation of sustainable building practices for these programs is accomplished in a thoughtful and practical manner,” said Howard. “Also, it is important to maintain a balance between the goals of affordable housing development and maximizing energy efficiency.”

Overly stringent or unrealistic goals for energy efficiency compliance could boost the cost of building affordable housing to a level that is not sustainable over the long term, he added.

As the committee moves to adopt green criteria that would apply to federally assisted housing programs, Howard urged lawmakers to consider the following principles:

- Recognize and plan for a variety of green building rating systems to help increase the sustainability of federally assisted housing and allow for regular review and updating of these standards and criteria. Congress should avoid naming specific green criteria in federal legislation that may seem sufficient today, but that could become quickly outdated or unworkable in the very near term, Howard said.
- Provide necessary resources, including the additional staff and technology needed to implement the programs, as well as appropriations to help support the additional costs of building green.
- Structure new programs in a manner that allows them to be used easily with other housing programs, avoids duplicative rules and regulations, and supports funding timelines in concert with other program rules.
- Provide financial and other incentives to developers and builders of affordable housing to help them meet and even exceed green building goals.
- Work with builders, lenders, the government sponsored enterprises, nonprofits, community groups, appraisers and others to develop attainable goals for the development of supportive financing mechanisms such as energy-efficient and location-efficient mortgages as well as appraisal standards that appropriately recognize the value of green building.
- Develop educational materials that can be used by the various stakeholders to learn and communicate best practices and promote sustainable federally assisted housing.

NAHB’s experience and support for voluntary green building goes back to the early 1990s and predates many of today’s green rating systems. Currently, the association is working with the International Code Council to complete a rigorous standards-developing process that will produce the first standard approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for green residential construction and remodeling – the National Green Building Standard™.

“The development of the National Green Building Standard™ is the most recent and most robust effort undertaken by the industry to encourage green building in residential construction,” said Howard. “When completed, it will be the only ANSI-approved standard for residential construction.”

As Congress works to incorporate green building in federal affordable housing programs, Howard added that NAHB looks forward to working with lawmakers to achieve the goal of increasing energy efficiency in all housing and ensure that the ability of these programs to serve low- and moderate-income Americans is maintained.