

LOIS FRANKEL
22ND DISTRICT, FLORIDA

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1037 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-9890

DISTRICT OFFICE:
2500 NORTH MILITARY TRAIL
SUITE #490
BOCA RATON, FL 33431
(561) 998-9045
TOLL FREE (866) 264-0957

frankel.house.gov

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0922

July 15, 2016

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA
EUROPE, EURASIA AND
EMERGING THREATS
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
WATER RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENT
COAST GUARD AND MARITIME
TRANSPORTATION
STEERING AND POLICY
COMMITTEE

Re: Sober Home Update

Over the past two months, there have been positive steps toward addressing the South Florida community's concerns about the over-proliferation of sober homes in neighborhoods. Below is an update on recent developments.

This week I met with one of the original authors of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the 1988 law that added disability status to the Fair Housing Act. Per her suggestion, I am reaching out to key individuals in the disability rights community, who can help make the case to HUD and DOJ that overconcentration of sober homes creates de facto segregation and violates longstanding principles of integrating disabled individuals into the community.

Last week, Congressman Chris Stewart (R-UT) and I sent a letter to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress' investigative arm, requesting a review of federal and state oversight of sober homes. This follows a similar request by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), and Marco Rubio (R-FL). The letter asks GAO for information about the number of sober homes in each state, how many individuals they serve, how they can be regulated at each level of government, how effective their services are, and their relationship with Medicaid and other federally-funded healthcare programs. The letter was signed by a bipartisan group of seventeen Members of Congress from across the country, including Florida Reps. Ted Deutch, Alcee Hastings, Frederica Wilson, and Carlos Curbelo.

Additionally, at my request, House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte and four of his committee colleagues wrote to the Department of Justice (DOJ) urging the agency to answer questions about the zoning, licensing, and regulation of sober homes.

In June, I spoke to Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta, the head of the DOJ Civil Rights Division, who has been working with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to update federal guidance on the regulation of sober homes. She assured me that DOJ takes our communities' concerns seriously and that she personally has been involved in efforts to update the DOJ-HUD Joint Statement on Group Homes. The agencies have exchanged several drafts and expect a final product in the very near future.

Ms. Gupta also said that HUD Assistant Secretary Gustavo Velasquez's trip to South Florida was extremely helpful in clarifying for both agencies the key issues our cities are facing with sober homes. I want to thank those of you who attended the listening session with HUD and spoke on behalf of your communities.

Congressman Deutch and I sent a letter to HUD Secretary Julian Castro and Attorney General Loretta Lynch this week encouraging them to move swiftly to address the questions you raised

during the meeting. Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Corrine Brown, Jeff Miller, Alcee Hastings, and Frederica Wilson also signed this letter.

Addressing the sober home issue remains a top priority for my office, and I look forward to your continued input and engagement as we move forward with this process. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact my District Director, Felicia Goldstein (Felicia.Goldstein@mail.house.gov) or Legislative Assistant, Grant Dubler (Grant.Dubler@mail.house.gov) on my staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lois Frankel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress