

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 23, 2016

The Honorable Juliàn Castro
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street SW
Washington DC 20410

RE: Greater Racine Promise Zone Designation, Round III

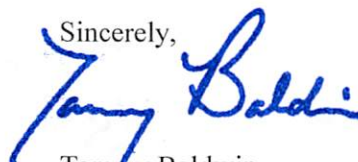
Dear Secretary Castro:

I am pleased to write in strong support of Greater Racine's application for an Urban Promise Zone designation through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is my understanding that this proposal was a finalist during a previous Promise Zone designation cycle, and HUD has encouraged Racine County stakeholders to apply again in this final round. Local leaders are confident that a Promise Zone designation will provide an opportunity for economic, commercial, and educational revitalization that would equalize opportunities and create a pathway to the middle class for many impoverished residents.

Communities in the County of Racine have experienced persistent high unemployment and poverty rates. According to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Population Health Sciences, some census blocks in Racine County have unemployment rates of more than 60 percent, with more than 50 percent of the population living below the Federal Poverty Limit. Additionally, the majority of individuals over the age of 26 in these census blocks have not attained a high school diploma or equivalent degree. These statistics are alarming. In order to address these challenges, the County of Racine, in collaboration with the City of Racine, Gateway Technical College, and a number of other implementation and supporting partner organizations are combining efforts to implement the "Greater Racine Promise Zone" Plan.

This plan aims to improve Kindergarten readiness, ensuring that all children enter school prepared to learn and succeed from early childhood through K12; improve job training and readiness to create a capable and employable workforce; increase economic development by redeveloping commercial areas and providing small business development assistance; improve health and wellness by increasing access to services for pregnant women and low-income families seeking mental health services; and reduce crime through cooperation between law enforcement and community members. Local leaders have demonstrated a strong commitment to these efforts, and federal assistance available through a Promise Zone designation will support the success of this project by increasing local organizations' capacities to achieve their goals.

Racine County leaders and I both believe a child's zip code should never determine his or her destiny. By establishing an Urban Promise Zone in Racine, leaders hope to break the cycle of poverty in this community, increase economic mobility for citizens and small businesses, and create new opportunities for hard-working Wisconsinites. As a U.S. Senator, I urge you to give full and fair consideration to the Greater Racine Promise Zone application in this third and final round of designations. Please keep me informed on the progress of this application and contact my staff should have any questions or concerns. My staff may be reached by phone at 608-264-5338 or email at projects_grants@baldwin.senate.gov. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

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