

# United States Senate

January 18, 2023

The Honorable Shalanda Young  
Director  
Office of Management and Budget  
725 17<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Director Young,

We write to request a briefing on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) pricing guidelines for federal housing, detailed in OMB Circular A-45R, and their impacts on federal wildland firefighters.

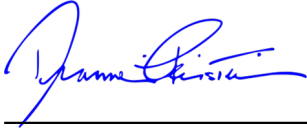
As you may know, the U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior have experienced chronic wildland firefighter staffing shortages in recent years, even as wildfires have become increasingly widespread and destructive. On November 17, 2022, the Government Accountability Office published a report on the barriers to wildland firefighter recruitment and retention, and one of the primary barriers identified by the report was the cost associated with a remote duty station, including the costs for federal housing. This finding confirms the anecdotes we have heard from firefighters across the nation that their housing units are in very poor condition and extremely expensive. Many wildland firefighters, however, work in remote areas with little available private housing, making them reliant on federally owned housing, regardless of the cost.

To better understand the issues surrounding federal housing, we request a briefing on how federal housing prices are determined. For example, we understand that if one person leaves a multi-room unit, the rent for the remaining residents increases accordingly, despite those residents having no control over whether a new person moves in. We also understand that changes were made to OMB Circular A-45R in 2019, including a new definition for a "bunkhouse" and a new formula for determining the price of remote housing. We would like to discuss whether these changes inadvertently increased housing costs for wildland firefighters and, if so, whether OMB is considering further revisions to remedy this problem.

Federal wildland firefighters have a difficult and dangerous job, and it is the federal government's responsibility to support them in this work. We

look forward to discussing these issues in detail and working with you to address the barriers to firefighter recruitment and retention.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



Steve Daines  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



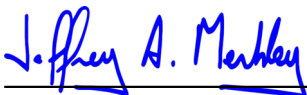
Michael D. Crapo  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator