

Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb., on Friday demanded an explanation of why public housing agencies were not given earlier notice about reduced funding in the Section 8 rental voucher program.

The reduced funding has led to drastic actions, including plans to eliminate some poor people's rent assistance.

At the Omaha Housing Authority, for example, 432 households will be cut from the program to help make up the shortfall. The Douglas County Housing Authority expects to cut about 50 single and adult couple households.

Terry, in a letter Friday to U.S. Housing Secretary Shaun Donovan, said that likely funding shortages in the Section 8 program had been discussed at hearings before a House appropriations subcommittee in March 2008.

But, he noted, the OHA didn't receive its first written notice of funding reductions until this May.

"It was given no notice of these possible reductions in funding more than a year ago," Terry wrote.

If the agency had been notified then, he said, "that may have given the OHA enough time to take steps to avoid the crisis it is now facing."

Terry said the Obama administration had several opportunities to request additional funding in the stimulus bill and the omnibus appropriations bill for fiscal year 2009.

He wants to know what steps HUD could have taken early in 2009 to head off the shortfall.

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