



**Carole Keeton Strayhorn**  
**Comptroller of Public Accounts**

512/463-4000  
FAX: 512/463-4965  
P.O. Box 219  
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78767-0219

February 28, 2003

**Mr. Steve Sterquell**  
**American Housing Foundation**  
**Post Office Box 7606**  
**Amarillo, Texas 79114-7606**

Dear Mr. Sterquell:

As a former public school teacher and former school board president, but most importantly as a mother and grandmother, I have a deep and abiding interest in education excellence for all Texas children. An educated Texan is ultimately an employable Texan.

That is why I am so pleased about the project American Housing Foundation is initiating in Texas and across the country. There are so many obstacles for students who wish to continue their education beyond high school, including the cost of housing, and I applaud your efforts to provide higher education opportunities for all students.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that by the year 2030, nearly 60 percent of all Texans will have only a high school diploma or less. I say "Hogwash!" That's unacceptable and it's up to us to prove it wrong!

As you know, I have a plan that I will vigorously pursue during the legislative session that will also benefit Texas students—*TexasNextStep*. My *TexasNextStep* plan will offer all Texas high school graduates the opportunity to attend college for two years at any public community college, technical college, or two-year institution designated by the Legislature. It will provide tuition, required fees, and textbooks free to any student who enrolls within 16 months of high school graduation. *TexasNextStep* will make K-14 education the norm, and it will set Texas apart in the race for future jobs. I have already found ongoing annual cost savings and additional revenue, with no tax increase, to pay for it. My goal is crystal clear—I want Texas to have the most educated workforce in the nation! I would rather spend \$1,700 a year educating young Texans, than \$15,000 a year incarcerating them!

In these tough economic times, it is critically important for our citizens, community leaders, and corporate partners to work hand-in-hand with our schools and universities. Your good work at American Housing Foundation is an investment in our economy and our future.

Mr. Steve Sterquell  
February 28, 2003  
Page Two

I thoroughly appreciate the opportunity to review your student-housing proposal. I certainly hope that every university you approach will give your project thorough consideration. Thanks for all that you do for Texas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carole Keeton Strayhorn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carole Keeton Strayhorn  
Texas Comptroller