

Dear Member of Congress:

We, the XXXX undersigned organizations, stand in support of vital federal programs that provide housing assistance and community development resources to aid low income Americans, and help improve our roads, bridges, and transit. These programs strengthen our country and economy by creating millions of jobs and offering a safety net to our most vulnerable households. With more families struggling to make ends meet, and our nation's affordable housing and transportation infrastructure deteriorating, federal investments are ever more critical to sustain our communities and ensure families thrive. We represent national, state, and local business, transportation, housing and community development, faith-based, disability, and civil rights organizations, as well as officials in municipal, tribal and state governments.

We urge Members of Congress to work together to provide relief from the austere spending caps required by the *Budget Control Act of 2011* and to ensure affordable housing, community development, and transportation programs receive the highest allocation of discretionary funds possible. We further urge Congress to continue to treat defense and nondefense programs equally when providing budget relief.

While we must work to reduce our nation's deficit over the long-term, balancing our budget should not be done on the backs of the low income families in our nation. Many of these families are already straining to get by; they should not be made worse off by deficit reduction.

Today, one in four renters in America is spending more than half of their income on rent, and homelessness rates are rising in many communities across the country as growing numbers of people are unable to afford a place to call home. Housing costs are rising faster than wages, our nation's affordable housing stock is deteriorating, and the supply of affordable and accessible housing and rental assistance has not kept pace. Access to accessible affordable housing has broad, positive impacts on families, seniors, people with disabilities, and the economy. Increasing and preserving access to affordable housing—especially in areas of opportunity—helps families climb the economic ladder, leads to greater community development, and bolsters economic productivity. Additionally, community development assistance is vital for rural, urban and suburban areas to revitalize distressed neighborhoods, address urgent community needs, and to provide for critical public services and economic development.

Meanwhile, 15 million people in this country have difficulty getting the transportation they need. Declining funding in recent years has exacerbated this problem. Transportation is second to housing as the largest expense for American households, costing more than food, healthcare, and clothing. Transportation systems are a lifeline to opportunity, connecting low income people to jobs, schools, affordable housing, healthcare, grocery stores, and other vital community resources. Modern, well-funded transportation systems make our nation stronger by allowing Americans to connect and contribute to our economy.

Congress must ensure that affordable housing and transportation programs receive the highest allocation of discretionary funds possible, rather than letting further cuts go into effect. In recent years, these programs have not received their fair share of funding compared to other federal programs. Since 2010, the combined funding for DOT and HUD housing assistance and community development programs fell 12.8%—worse than the 11.7% average cut in funding for non-defense discretionary programs. Because of these past budget cuts, Congress missed an opportunity to provide an economic

stimulus to our economy, at a time when it was still recovering from the Great Recession. Each dollar invested in affordable housing infrastructure boosts local economies by leveraging public and private resources to lift resident earnings and local tax revenue, as well as to support job creation and retention. In fact, building 100 affordable rental homes generates \$11.7 million in local income, \$2.2 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 161 local jobs in the first year. Research has also shown that expanding public transit by 10%, increases a city's economic output by 1-2%.

State and local governments and the communities they serve rely on the resources provided by DOT and HUD to meet the most basic infrastructure needs of their communities. These infrastructure needs—including for transportation, community development, and accessible affordable housing—exist in every community across the country. Providing additional federal resources through proven, effective DOT and HUD programs will allow America's neighborhoods to thrive and for the needs of more of our most vulnerable residents to be met.

We urge you to provide relief from the low budget caps required by sequester and ensure affordable housing, community development, and transportation programs receive the highest amount of funding possible.

Sincerely,

[list in formation]