



Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding
Working to ensure maximum federal resources for housing and community development.

November 24, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Cochran, Vice Chair Mikulski, Chair Rogers, and Ranking Member Lowey:

As the Steering Committee of the Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding (CHCDF), we urge you to approve a fiscal year 2016 budget that prioritizes funding for Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs that help low-income families to afford decent housing and make ends meet, avoid homelessness, and revitalize their neighborhoods into healthier communities that provide the opportunities they need to succeed. CHCDF is a coalition of national groups representing a broad spectrum of housing and community development organizations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories.

Despite the effectiveness of HUD programs, sequestration and other recent funding cuts have diminished their reach, and only a fraction of eligible families receive the assistance they need. Accordingly, we welcomed the passage of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015 (BBA), which raised the 2016 spending limit for non-defense discretionary programs and thereby opened an opportunity for policymakers to reverse recent cuts to HUD's critical safety net programs.

The Senate Transportation-HUD bill released last week takes important steps in this direction — for instance, the bill reverses the earlier Senate bill's proposal to nearly eliminate the HOME program — but we strongly urge you to further strengthen HUD programs in the final omnibus agreement. Overall, the revised Senate bill would increase total funding for housing assistance and community development programs — the two categories of HUD programs that serve the poorest, most vulnerable Americans — by 3.9 percent over the 2015 level. While welcome, this increase is well below the 6.9 percent increase in funding that non-defense discretionary programs received, on average, as a result of the BBA.

Additional funding would enable Congress to achieve important goals, like reducing homelessness and helping more seniors and people with disabilities to afford housing, preserving more public and assisted affordable housing for the future, and helping more children grow up in more vibrant communities. It would also enable Congress to restore funding for lead hazard abatement and restore more Housing Choice Vouchers that were lost due to sequestration.

HUD programs reduce poverty and homelessness — in fact, recent funding for HUD VASH vouchers have yielded tremendous progress in reducing homelessness among our nation’s veterans. Responsibly-funded HUD programs also improve children’s health and well-being, and help seniors and people with disabilities to avoid the unnecessary use of hospitals, nursing homes, and other expensive institutions. More than five million of the nation’s most vulnerable households — nearly all of which include seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, or families with children — use HUD rental assistance to afford stable and safe housing, and avoid homelessness. The National Housing Trust Fund, which Congress should not raid in the appropriations process, will be an important new resource for states.

HUD programs also promote the well-being of our communities by providing essential capital and program funding that enables public and private partners to build critical transportation and other infrastructure, improve neighborhood safety and quality, and spur economic development.

Earlier this year, more than 3,000 national, state and local business, transportation, housing and community development, faith-based, and civil rights organizations, as well as state and local officials wrote to ask that you provide a robust allocation for the Transportation-HUD funding bill. We urge you to meet this request, and invest in the success of America’s communities by acting to strengthen HUD’s housing assistance and community development programs in the final omnibus funding legislation for fiscal year 2016.

Sincerely,

Steering Committee of the Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Council of Large Public Housing Authorities
CSH
Enterprise Community Partners
LeadingAge
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials
National Council of State Housing Agencies
National Housing Trust
National Low Income Housing Coalition

cc:

The Honorable Susan Collins
The Honorable Jack Reed
The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
The Honorable David Price