



Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding

Working to ensure maximum federal resources for housing and community development

August 27, 2020

The Honorable Susan Collins
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Price
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Collins, Ranking Member Reed, Chair Price, and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

We write to express our sincere gratitude for your long-standing commitment to ensuring low-income people – and particularly seniors, people with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, women-headed households, survivors of domestic violence, and youth aging out of foster care – have the safe, stable, healthy, accessible and affordable housing they need to thrive. The House Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 spending bill secures robust increases for many HUD programs, despite the limits imposed by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, provides much needed emergency infrastructure investments, and safeguards fair and equitable access to housing resources. These provisions, while always crucial, take on a new urgency and necessity in light of the coronavirus pandemic. **We urge the Senate THUD Appropriations Subcommittee to follow the House's lead and introduce an FY21 bill that provides robust increases to HUD's essential programs at a level equal to or greater than levels provided in the House bill, and includes legislative language to ensure fair housing, equal access to shelters, and no-barrier homelessness resources.**

Providing enough funding to renew all existing Housing Choice Voucher and Project-Based Rental Assistance contracts for 12 months will ensure these families can remain safely and stably housed throughout the duration of the pandemic and beyond. Adequate administrative fee funding is also required for public housing authorities to assist current households with their vouchers and assist new voucher recipients in obtaining housing. The additional significant funding for new vouchers dedicated to people experiencing homeless or at severe risk of homelessness – including veterans, youth exiting foster care assisted by the Family Unification Program, people fleeing domestic violence, and others – will help meet their urgent need for safe, accessible and secure housing during this crisis.

Increased funding for Section 202 Housing for the Elderly and Section 811 Housing for People with Disabilities will help property owners adhere to standards of cleanliness and social distancing recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and protect those most vulnerable to coronavirus infection. Moreover, among Native communities chronic overcrowding and a lack of necessities like plumbing and heat have disproportionately exposed Native people to coronavirus infections and fatalities. Providing additional resources for tribal housing will help spur the construction and preservation of affordable, accessible rental housing on tribal lands.

The additional funding provided for the HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and the Choice Neighborhoods Initiatives program will provide communities the flexible funding needed to tailor their coronavirus response to the specific needs of community members. Increased resources for the Public Housing Operating Fund, and particularly the significant additional funding for the Public Housing Capital Fund provided in the bill's emergency appropriations, will help public housing agencies modernize, renovate, and reconstruct units in need of critical improvements and reduce the enormous public housing modernization backlog by approximately one-third. These critical improvements will help preserve public housing units, improve quality of life, and address the health and safety needs of hundreds of thousands of public housing residents, many of whom are seniors or people with disabilities.

Expanded funding for Homeless Assistance Grants will help communities respond to and prevent coronavirus outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness, who are less able to engage in the preventative measures recommended by the CDC and more likely to have underlying health conditions that make coronavirus particularly deadly. These resources can help minimize the number of people living in homeless encampments and congregate shelters by providing homelessness prevention, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing.

We also urge you to include legislative language included in the House bill. Provisions to block HUD's rollback of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule of 2015 will help preserve the progress made in rectifying historic, government-driven patterns of racist housing discrimination and segregation. Legislative language to impede HUD's proposed anti-transgender changes to the Equal Access Rule will help protect the lives and safety of trans people seeking shelter, especially trans women of color. And, provisions to ensure fair and equitable access to no-barrier homelessness resources for all people in need will undoubtedly help save lives.

While we are grateful for your tireless support of affordable housing and community development programs, we also want to draw your attention to the delay in HUD's disbursement of funding allocated in March through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). The CARES Act provided crucial funding to HUD programs, including Section 811 and Section 202 housing, to ensure low-income residents remain stably housed during the pandemic and owners and operators of HUD-assisted housing have the resources necessary to prevent or respond to an outbreak. The bill also granted HUD Secretary Ben Carson broad

authority to expedite the use of funds to respond to coronavirus, but despite this authority HUD did not issue a notice of funding distribution until July 23, and gave property owners a deadline of August 5 to file. HUD has moved with a glacial pace to distribute these potentially lifesaving funds and has not been transparent in its decision-making process. Congress should hold HUD accountable to its obligation to distribute CARES Act resources with the urgency and transparency this moment requires.

Thank you again for your leadership in championing solutions to address housing instability, homelessness, and community development. We look forward to continuing our work with you in the coming years and meeting the new challenges and opportunities that will undoubtedly surface as we navigate this historic moment.

Sincerely,

B'nai B'rith International
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force
Council of Large Public Housing Authorities
Enterprise Community Partners
Grounded Solutions Network
LeadingAge
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Low Income Investment Fund
National Affordable Housing Management Association
National AIDS Housing Coalition
National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association for County Community and Economic Development
National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders
National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders
National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
National Disability Rights Network
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Homelessness Law Center
National Housing Law Project
National Housing & Rehabilitation Association
National Housing Trust
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Partnership for Women and Families
National Women's Law Center

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
New York City Housing Development Corporation
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future
The Arc of the United States
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society
Union for Reform Judaism