

April 1, 2022

The Honorable Janet Yellen  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Treasury  
Washington D.C. 20220

The Honorable Marcia Fudge  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Washington D.C. 20220

The Honorable Susan E. Rice  
Director  
Domestic Policy Council  
White House  
Washington D.C. 20220

The Honorable Gene Sperling  
American Rescue Plan Coordinator and Senior  
Advisor to the President  
White House  
Washington, D.C. 20220

To Secretary Yellen, Secretary Fudge, Director Rice, and Senior Advisor Sperling:

We, the undersigned housing advocacy organizations participating in the National Low Income Housing Coalition's ERASE (End Rental Arrears to Stop Evictions) Cohort, write to urge the Biden administration and the U.S. Department of the Treasury to make publicly available disaggregated demographic data for all state and local Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) programs. The disproportionate economic effects of the pandemic have widened existing racial inequities, and Treasury's ERA program is a critical tool to mitigate some of these effects. Demographic data would promote a better understanding of who is being served by ERA, which is critical to identifying areas for course corrections and planning for future efforts to assist households once all ERA is disbursed.

The ERASE Cohort is a selected group of state and local nonprofit partners that are conducting on-the-ground partnership development, capacity building, outreach and education, policy reform, and systems change work to ensure that ERA funds reach renters and small landlords with the greatest need for assistance, especially Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and other marginalized people and communities and to build support for long-term housing solutions.

We appreciate Treasury's recent release of data on the total national distribution of ERA funds by race, ethnicity, gender, and income as of December 2021. As outlined by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, Treasury is required to release the following data: the acceptance rate of applicants for assistance; the type or types of assistance provided to each eligible household; the average amount of funding provided per eligible household receiving assistance; household income level; and the average number of monthly rental or utility payments that were covered by the funding amount that a household received.

ERA data must also be made available disaggregated by each state and local program as soon as possible. While some state and local programs are providing distribution data by race, income, and other demographics regularly, many of us work with state and local programs that have not shared this information, either publicly as a matter of course or by request.

Rather than just being evaluative, this data has critical implications for the programs' current work. While several programs have distributed all, or a large portion of their ERA funds, many still have a significant amount of ERA resources to spend. As of February 28, more than \$7 billion of ERA 1 funds remained unspent. The demographic data by state and local program would be useful for our work supporting equitable distribution of ERA by allowing us to identify any disparities that may exist on the local level as well as determining where outreach and engagement efforts are best targeted for the ERA funds that have yet to be spent.

Whether because of an unwillingness to share information or the lack of capacity to prepare the data for release, communities of practice are unable to assess the systemwide effectiveness of these programs locally. The ability to successfully track demographic metrics will help to ensure that equity is at the forefront of decisions and that all decisions and program evaluations are based on data. National aggregates, while indicators of overall program success, are inadequate to inform local systems change. Because these data points are already being sent to Treasury, we believe that making these statistics publicly available is the most efficient way to remedy this situation.

Thank you for your leadership and the Department's work distributing ERA funds to households impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting the health of our communities by keeping families securely housed. Thank you, also, for the time spent listening to the requests and recommendations voiced by NLIHC and the ERASE Cohort. We look forward to working with the Department on a resolution to our concern and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned NLIHC ERASE Cohort

CC:

Noel Andrés Poyo, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Economic Development, U.S. Department of Treasury

Erika Poethig, Special Assistant to the President for Housing and Urban Policy, Domestic Policy Council