

Dear Chair Leahy, Ranking Member Shelby, Chair Lowey, and Ranking Member Granger:

We, the ___ undersigned organizations, write in support of vital federal programs that provide housing assistance and community development resources to aid low-income households. We represent national, state, and local business, 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 ensure affordable housing and community development programs receive the highest allocation of discretionary funds possible in fiscal year (FY) 2022. Since rents and other market rates generally rise each year, appropriations for affordable housing and community development programs need to increase annually to maintain current levels of assistance. Flat funding acts as a cut, reducing the number of low-income households served and preventing private owners and public housing agencies from making vital repairs.

Even before the pandemic, the country was in the midst of a pervasive affordable housing crisis. One in four renters spent more than half of their income on rent, and homelessness rates were rising in communities across the country. A growing number of people have been unable to afford a place to call home, and the number of accessible homes remains at low levels despite increasing need. Our nation's housing crisis impacts people of color in particular because of generations of discrimination and disinvestment. Housing costs are rising faster than wages, our nation's affordable housing crisis worsening, and the supply of affordable and accessible housing and rental assistance has not kept pace.

Now, coronavirus has accentuated the inextricable link between housing and health and brought to light longstanding disparities in access to critical resources like affordable, accessible housing that have contributed to the virus's disproportionate impact on communities of color, people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income people. The pandemic has underscored the health and economic costs of an underfunded housing system. Affordable, safe, stable, and accessible housing is essential for public health and well-being. Without access to quality homes, it becomes exceedingly more difficult to effectively "shelter in place" and follow social distancing protocol, increasing the likelihood of coronavirus infection, transmission, and fatality.

With more families struggling to make ends meet due to the pandemic and our nation's affordable housing crisis worsening, federal investments are ever more critical to create more equitable communities and ensure families thrive. Federal housing and community development programs create millions of jobs and offer critical resources to disenfranchised individuals and communities.

Accessible, affordable housing has broad, positive impacts on individuals, families, communities, 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 provide critical public services and

economic development. Investing in affordable housing infrastructure reduces existing inequities and boosts local economies by leveraging public and private resources to lift resident earnings and local tax revenue. 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.

State and local governments and the communities they serve rely on the resources provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to meet the infrastructure needs of their communities. These infrastructure needs exist in every community across the country. Providing additional federal resources through proven, effective HUD and USDA housing programs will allow neighborhoods to thrive and meet the needs of more of our lowest-income residents.

We urge you to ensure affordable housing and community development programs receive the highest amount of funding possible in FY 2022.

Sincerely,