

March 16, 2016

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Committee on Banking,
Housing and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
Ranking Member, Committee on Banking,
Housing and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Brown:

The undersigned organizations, which include a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the housing affordability realm, urge Senate passage of “The Housing Opportunities through Modernization Act” (H.R. 3700), without delay and without additions to this bill that makes commonsense reforms to federal housing policy. The U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 3700 unanimously on February 2, 2016. This legislation represents the best of bipartisan work and compromise.

Our nation faces tremendous housing needs. This legislation is an important step forward to address a number of significant items which have enjoyed broad consensus over the years. There is more to be done to address housing and community development needs, but H.R. 3700 represents solid progress in the right direction. If enacted, this bipartisan bill would build on the effectiveness of federal rental assistance while achieving some modest savings.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s rental assistance programs face difficult budget pressures, and this reform legislation would help state and local agencies stretch limited funds and reduce the risk of harsh cuts in assistance to families in need. These reforms ease administrative burdens for housing agencies and owners, while delivering fairer and more efficient assistance to low-income families. In addition, the bill provides new tools to preserve affordable housing, reduce homelessness, increase self-sufficiency and expand access to areas of greater opportunity.

Importantly, H.R. 3700 would make these improvements while leaving in place the core characteristics that have helped make federal rental assistance programs effective. The bill’s rental assistance provisions, taken together, also avoid any cost increase, and could modestly reduce the cost of providing the current level of assistance.

Congress has vetted most of the bill’s provisions for nearly a decade as part of earlier proposals that have had broad support in Congress and among stakeholders, but have never become law. We urge the Senate to move with urgency to approve the House-passed version of H.R. 3700 and to send it the President’s desk for enactment.

We stand ready to work with you to help achieve this goal. We will request a meeting with your Committee staff in the next few days to begin that process.

Catholic Charities USA	National Apartment Association
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities	National Association of Home Builders
Consortium for Citizens With Disabilities	National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO)
Housing Task Force	National Association of Housing Cooperatives
Council for Affordable and Rural Housing	National Association of REALTORS®
Council of Large Public Housing Authorities	National Council of State Housing Agencies
CSH (Corporation for Supportive Housing)	National Disability Rights Network
Enterprise Community Partners	National Housing Law Project
Housing Assistance Council (HAC)	National Low Income Housing Coalition
Housing Partnership Network	National Multifamily Housing Council
Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States	NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
LeadingAge	Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA)
Local Initiatives Support Corporation	Technical Assistance Collaborative
Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)	The Institute of Real Estate Management
National Affordable Housing Management Association	The Salvation Army, National Headquarters
National AIDS Housing Coalition	
National Alliance on Mental Illness	
National Alliance to End Homelessness	

c.c.:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
The Honorable Harry Reid