

March 1, 2018

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

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

As you negotiate the Transportation-HUD (THUD) title of the forthcoming fiscal year 2018 omnibus spending bill, we thank you for your long-standing commitment to helping seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children who struggle to pay the rent and make ends meet, and we urge you to support affordable housing programs at the highest level possible. The bipartisan agreement to lift the low spending caps is a unique opportunity to strengthen HUD programs to help more of the nation's most vulnerable individuals and families live in safe, stable, affordable housing, allowing them to live with dignity and supporting their efforts to improve their lives. For this reason, we urge you to use the increased funding made available by the recent budget deal to prioritize affordable housing and homelessness programs – particularly public housing, homeless assistance, and housing vouchers – and to fund other critical affordable housing programs at the higher of the levels proposed in the House and Senate bills.

Federal rental assistance sharply reduces housing instability and homelessness, and research shows that it benefits families in other ways, too. For instance, homeless families who receive rental assistance are more likely to have adequate food on the table, less likely to experience domestic violence, and less likely to have their children placed into foster care. When rental assistance enables families to live in safe neighborhoods with quality schools, their children are also more likely to attend college, less likely to become single parents, and earn more as adults. It also enables seniors and people with disabilities to live in the community settings of their choice, and avoid placement in hospitals, nursing homes, and other expensive institutional settings.

We believe that using the increased funding made available by the recent budget deal to make increased investments in the following areas of the HUD budget – above the proposed Senate levels – will have the greatest positive impact on vulnerable individuals and families:

- 1) **Public housing:** Home to one million households—mostly seniors and people with disabilities—public housing is in dire need of increased federal investment. Because of chronic underfunding, 10,000 public housing units are lost each year to disrepair, while the public housing capital backlog exceeds

\$26 billion, and continues to grow.¹ We ask that you provide \$5 billion for the Public Housing Capital Fund in 2018, which will enable housing agencies to make critical repairs, such as fixing leaky roofs and replacing outdated heating systems, that will improve living conditions for tens of thousands of residents and help preserve this essential part of the nation's affordable housing infrastructure for the future.

- 2) **Homeless Assistance:** We also ask that you increase funding for the HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants to \$2.6 billion in 2018. The community-based nonprofits and local governments that receive these funds have leveraged them to create effective, economical systems to quickly resolve the most severe housing crises. But they are facing the most severe challenge in years, due to rising rents and evictions. With this increase, we could house approximately 40,000 more people nationally. This will allow communities to keep up with the rising number of people losing their housing due to increasing rents.
- 3) **Housing Vouchers:** Providing sufficient funds to renew all Housing Choice Vouchers that families are currently using should also be a high priority in the final bill. Despite your leadership in fighting for much-needed housing resources, neither the House nor Senate 2018 THUD spending bill currently provides adequate funding to achieve this goal. According to estimates that HUD released in December, \$19.6 billion will be required to fully renew vouchers in 2018, some \$230 million above the Senate bill level and \$900 million above the level in the 2018 House bill.² Without these additional funds, tens of thousands fewer families will receive the help they need this year to pay the rent and avoid homelessness.

In addition, we strongly support the provisions of the 2018 House and Senate bill that would expand Housing Choice Vouchers for homeless veterans (VASH), families that are at risk of losing their children to foster care because they are unable to afford adequate housing (the Family Unification Program), and non-elderly people with disabilities ("mainstream" vouchers). In total, these provisions allocate \$105 million for roughly 13,000 new housing vouchers to address some of the nation's most urgent needs. (These investments would also effectively restore vouchers that were removed from circulation in 2017 due to renewal funding shortfalls. For only the second time in 11 years, agencies last year received much less renewal funding than was required to renew all vouchers in use, compelling many to reduce the number of households they served.)

We also urge you to fund other critical affordable housing programs administered by HUD at the higher of the levels proposed in the House and Senate bills.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in championing solutions to address homelessness and our country's affordable housing crisis. To this end, we urge you to use this opportunity to invest in the success of America's communities and families by increasing funding for critical HUD programs in FY18 to address shortfalls in the earlier proposed House and Senate THUD spending bills and to help make progress toward important goals,

¹ Finkel, M., Lam, K. et al. (2010). Capital Needs in the Public Housing Program. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc. Retrieved from https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=PH_Capital_Needs.pdf.

² Including funding for administrative fees, new tenant protection vouchers, and the additional vouchers for homeless veterans and others discussed below, we recommend total funding of \$21.6 billion for housing vouchers.

like ending homelessness and helping children grow up in areas of opportunity. We look forward to continuing to work with you as you finalize the appropriations process for the current year.

Sincerely,



Diane Yentel
President and CEO
National Low Income Housing Coalition



Nan Roman
President and CEO
National Alliance to End Homelessness



Barbara Sard
Vice President for Housing Policy
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

CC:

The Honorable Thad Cochran

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen

The Honorable Nita Lowey