October 4, 2019

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

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

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

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

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

The bipartisan agreement to lift the low spending caps provides an 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. Your long-standing commitment to helping seniors, people with disabilities, and youth and families with children who struggle to pay the rent and make ends meet is evident in the fiscal year 2020 Transportation-HUD spending bills that your respective subcommittees have already approved, as each bill provides substantial additional resources to help meet critical housing needs. As you negotiate the THUD title of the forthcoming final bill, we urge you to use the funding made available by the recent budget deal to support affordable housing programs at the highest level possible, with particular attention to the priority areas (such as those outlined below) that have the greatest impact on the nation's most vulnerable people.

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 more likely to have increased earnings 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 funding made available by the recent budget deal to make increased investments in the following areas of the HUD budget will have the greatest positive impact on vulnerable individuals and families:

1. **Homeless Assistance:** We ask that you increase funding for the HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants to $3 billion in 2020. 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 70,000 more people nationally. This will allow communities to keep up with the rising number of people losing their housing due to increasing rents.

2. **Housing Vouchers:** We request that you provide at least $23.9 billion for housing vouchers in 2020, including $21.5 billion to fully renew the vouchers that 2.2 million low-income households are currently using and avert a reduction in the number of households receiving assistance. We also support the House bill's renewal funding provision that authorizes HUD to allocate a modest amount of funding to help housing agencies that have experienced voucher losses in recent years to reverse some of those losses. In addition, our request includes $40 million for new Family Unification Program vouchers, including $20 million targeted on at-risk young people who have exited foster care, as well as $40 million for new vouchers for homeless veterans. We were pleased that the House and Senate bills both included provisions that would streamline and expand foster youth's access to vouchers as a strategy to reduce the very high rates of homelessness and instability that these young people experience. We also encourage you to provide $25 million for the Housing Voucher Mobility Demonstration program, which helps low-income families with children to move to safe neighborhoods with high-quality schools.

3. **Family Self-Sufficiency Program:** Please provide $100 million for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which provides assisted residents with incentives and support to help them improve their earnings.

4. **Public housing:** Home to one million households—mostly seniors and people with disabilities—public housing is in dire need of increased federal investment. A 2010 HUD-sponsored study estimated the public housing capital backlog at $26 billion, and recent estimates from local housing agencies suggest that actual needs are considerably higher.[1] Because of chronic underfunding, 10,000 public housing units are lost each year to disrepair. We ask that you provide a total of $7.6 billion for the Public Housing Capital and Operating Funds in 2020 to enable housing agencies to make critical repairs, such as fixing leaky roofs and replacing outdated heating

[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.

systems, that will improve living conditions for residents and help preserve this essential part of the nation's affordable housing infrastructure for the future.

In addition, we strongly support the provisions of the 2020 House bill that would protect mixed-status immigrant families from eviction in HUD and USDA properties and to protect transgender people experiencing homelessness from discrimination when seeking shelter. We also urge you to fund other critical affordable housing programs administered by HUD at the highest levels possible.

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 FY20 to help make progress toward important goals, like ending homelessness and address America's growing affordable housing crisis. We look forward to continuing to work with you as you finalize the appropriations process for the current year.

Sincerely,



Peggy Bailey
Vice President for Housing Policy
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities



Nan Roman
President and CEO
National Alliance to End Homelessness



Shamus Roller
Executive Director
National Housing Law Project



Diane Yentel
President and CEO
National Low Income Housing Coalition

CC:
The Honorable Richard Shelby
The Honorable Patrick Leahy
The Honorable Kay Granger
The Honorable Nita Lowey