

June 12, 2018

Speaker Paul Ryan
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

The undersigned 29 national housing, homelessness, behavioral health services, and recovery housing organizations thank you for your commitment to addressing the opioid epidemic and helping all people with substance use disorders (SUD) access treatment and recovery services. We also appreciate Congress recognizing the important role affordable housing plays in people's recovery process and post-treatment stability.

We write to you today to express our concern regarding **H.R. 5735, the Transitional Housing for Recovery in Viable Environments Demonstration Program Act**. This bill would divert 10,000 vouchers, or \$83 million, away from the Housing Choice Voucher program to pay for transitional recovery housing for people with substance use disorders. Our primary concern is that this proposal would lengthen affordable housing waiting lists for low-income families, seniors, people experiencing homelessness, and people leaving substance use treatment or recovery housing. Currently, only 1 in 4 households who are eligible for federal affordable housing assistance receive it. While we do want Congress to invest in additional recovery housing and SUD services, we **don't** support a proposal that makes federal housing vouchers harder for low-income people to receive.

Recovery housing can play an important role in helping people with substance use disorders stabilize their lives and recovery housing providers need more capacity. Recovery housing is typically set in sober living communities — in which everyone living in the house or building has sobriety as their goal — that help people access both outpatient and onsite services and counseling. Some people find this structure and support helpful in their recovery process. There is no dedicated funding source for recovery housing and more resources are needed. But recovery housing shouldn't be financed at the expense of the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program which needs MORE, not less funding to meet demand. Especially in an environment where Congress has pledged over \$6 billion in new funding to address the opioid epidemic, housing investment should be increased.

Rather than taking vouchers away from the HCV program, we believe Congress should add resources to federal grant programs, such as programs administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, that help people with SUDs access housing to meet their needs, including recovery housing.

Therefore, we urge the House to **reject** HR 5735, the Transitional Housing for Recovery in Viable Environments Demonstration Program Act, so that Members can come together to craft an alternative that helps people struggling to find stable and

appropriate housing with access to services of their choice as they work to remain sober, without taking scarce housing resources away from low-income families, seniors, and those at risk of homelessness. Our organizations stand ready to work with you to find a solution that addresses all of these important goals.

Sincerely,

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
Center for Law and Social Policy
Coalition on Human Needs
Community Catalyst
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Council of Large Public Housing Authorities
Fundors Together to End Homelessness
Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky
Housing Assistance Council
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders
National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Council of Churches
National Disability Rights Network
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Trust
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Leased Housing Association
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Public Housing Authorities Directors Association
Technical Assistance Collaborative, Inc.
The Arc of the United States