



NATIONAL COALITION FOR HOUSING JUSTICE

May 20, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

To Chair Leahy, Ranking Member Shelby, Chair DeLauro, and Ranking Member Granger:

The [National Coalition for Housing Justice](https://nchj.org) writes to urge Congress to prioritize targeted programs in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 spending bills to address the growing housing and homelessness crisis in communities across the nation. Even before the pandemic, only one in four renters eligible for housing assistance received any help, and homelessness rates were rising in communities across the country – disproportionately harming Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. Today, housing costs are rising faster than wages and the supply of affordable and accessible housing and rental assistance for the lowest-income and most marginalized people has not kept pace. The pandemic has caused these same households to be even more precariously housed, putting even more people at risk of homelessness.

The NCHJ is a group of national organizations that have aligned behind seeking housing justice in order to end homelessness. Our vision of housing justice realizes the right for everyone in our country to have affordable, safe, accessible, and stable housing. Our approach is grounded in racial justice, economic justice, and equity for all who have been marginalized or minoritized.

The FY 2023 appropriations bills provide an important, immediate opportunity to advance the housing solutions that will help us deliver on our shared vision of racial justice and equity and housing for all. **In particular, we urge you to include the following investments - aligned with Housing First principles - in the House and Senate appropriations bills:**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

- **\$32.1 billion for the Housing Choice Voucher program** to expand assistance to 200,000 more households and continue assistance for millions more, as proposed by President Biden. Of this amount, we urge you to provide **\$90 million for HUD-VASH vouchers, \$5 million for tribal VASH vouchers, \$12 billion for housing vouchers for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and other special needs (Section 202, 811, and choice vouchers), and \$320 million for FUP vouchers.** Rental assistance is a critical tool for helping people with the lowest incomes afford decent, stable homes, and avoid homelessness. The expansion of rental assistance is central to any strategy to solve the nation's housing crisis.

The National Coalition for Housing Justice is a group of national organizations who have aligned behind seeking housing justice in order to end homelessness. Go to <https://nchj.org/about/> for membership.



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- **Congress should direct HUD to create a cash assistance demonstration through the Office of Public and Indian Housing and the Office of Policy Development and Research and provide HUD the flexibility to reduce barriers to the voucher program**, including burdensome documentation, criminal legal involvement, and immigration status.
- **\$3.6 billion for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants** program, which provides funding to states and local governments and nonprofit providers to serve individuals and families across the United States who are affected by homelessness. These critical resources are vital to efforts to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families, connect these households to public benefits, and assisting people to quickly regain stability in permanent housing after experiencing a housing crisis and/or homelessness. Of this amount, we support **\$278 million to extrapolate the best practices and system-changes from the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program to all Continuums of Care nationwide**. Of the funds requested, we recommend \$219 million for youth-specific projects, \$49 million for youth systems change grants, and \$10 million for technical assistance for systems change projects.
- **\$5.125 billion for the Public Housing Capital Fund and \$5.06 billion for the Public Housing Operating Fund**. Public housing is critical to ensuring people with the greatest needs have an affordable and accessible place to call home, and the preservation of this community asset is key to any strategy to address America's housing crisis. Congress has divested from public housing for decades, resulting in over \$70 billion in unmet capital backlog needs. As a result, our nation loses 10,000 to 15,000 units of public housing every year to obsolescence or decay and other units fall into disrepair.
- **\$100 million for legal assistance to prevent evictions**. These resources support experienced legal service providers in providing legal assistance at no cost to low-income tenants at risk of eviction. Evictions have long-term impacts on individuals, families, and communities, risking lives and pushing families deeper into poverty. Following an eviction, a person's likelihood of experiencing homelessness increases, mental and physical health is diminished, and the probability of maintaining or obtaining employment declines.
- **\$300 million for the competitive tribal housing program**, targeted to tribes with the greatest needs. Tribal nations have some of the worst housing needs in the United States. They face high poverty rates and low incomes, overcrowding, lack of plumbing and heat, and unique development issues. Despite the growing need for safe, decent homes, federal investments in affordable housing on tribal lands have been chronically underfunded for decades, particularly in more rural and remote areas.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- **\$300 million for Runaway and Homeless Youth services**, including \$260 million for the consolidated runaway and homeless youth programs and \$40 million for street outreach services. We further urge reforms, allowable under existing statute, to the Basic Center and Transitional Living programs to align these grant lines with the principles of Housing First, reduce barriers to services and housing retention, and to



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provide youth additional flexibility and choice. These reforms include offering grantees support for prevention services to better align the programs with current and emerging research demonstrating the importance of prevention services within the continuum of support for young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

- **Extension of flexibility and eligibility reforms for states in administering Chafee funds** to provide housing assistance to youth through age 26 with current or former lived experience of foster care beyond the current expiration on September 30, 2022, as well as Chafee-funded case management for all youth receiving HUD vouchers via the Family Unification Program (FUP) or the Foster Youth Initiative (FYI).
- **\$250 million for Building Capacity of Public Health Systems** to identify, address, and prevent housing instability through collaborations with public housing agencies and nonprofit community-based providers of healthcare and related services. Capacity building activities would include, but not be limited to, training provider staff, integrating data across systems, hiring service coordinators, establishing and funding flexible services funds, and acquiring technology that improves services coordination and delivery. Funding would come from the Health Surveillance and Program Support account and would be prioritized for (1) nonprofit community-based providers that serve communities with highest rates of housing instability and homelessness in each county and (2) states that will modify Medicaid plans in 2023 to include local cross-sector approaches to address homelessness and housing instability.

U.S. Department of Labor

- **\$107.5 million for the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program**, which provides services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of service delivery systems that will address the employment challenges facing homeless veterans.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- **\$275 million for the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program (HCHV)** performs outreach to identify veterans experiencing homelessness who are eligible for VA services and assist these veterans in accessing appropriate health care and benefits.
- **\$500 million for the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem** to promote the development and provision of transitional housing and services with the goal of helping homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income, and obtain greater self-determination. The request includes \$180 million for post-covid per diem adjustments and \$50 million for the next round of Capital Grants.
- **\$75 million for the Healthcare for Reentry Veterans and Veterans Justice Outreach program** to help justice-involved veterans avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration by ensuring that eligible veterans have timely access to veterans Health Administration mental health.



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- **\$795 million for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)** program, which provides funding for very low-income veteran families in or transitioning to permanent housing. The Secretary has expressed a departmental goal of permanently housing an additional 38,000 homeless veterans by the end of the year and the funding should reflect that aim.
- **\$594 million for the Case Management for the HUD-VASH Program** to help case managers work with homeless veterans to use this resource to address the multifaceted needs of homeless veterans.
- **The highest funding possible for Medical Support and Compliance** accounts under VA Medical Services supporting homeless veteran programs requires additional funding to support the use of administrative fees for the hiring and retention of staff.

Sincerely,

National Coalition for Housing Justice*

**NCHJ members include: A Way Home America, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Community Solutions, CSH, Funders Together to End Homelessness, Heartland Alliance, Housing Justice Collective, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, National Coalition for the Homeless, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, National Homelessness Law Center, National Low Income Housing Coalition, True Colors United, Youth Collaboratory*