



February 20, 2020

The Honorable Maxine Waters
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

To Chair Waters:

On behalf of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, I write to express strong support for H.R. 5187, "*The Housing Is Infrastructure Act*," which you introduced earlier this year. In particular, NLIHC supports the robust investments in the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and public housing included in the bill. We are committed to working with you to ensure that any infrastructure package enacted by Congress includes at least \$5 billion for the HTF and \$70 billion for the public housing capital fund in order to increase and preserve the supply of affordable homes for people with the lowest incomes.

As included in my [testimony](#) before the House Financial Services Committee in April 2019, an infrastructure package provides a unique opportunity to address one of the most critical issues facing extremely low-income families today: the lack of decent, accessible, and affordable housing. The underlying cause of our nation's affordable housing crisis is the shortage of homes affordable and available to America's poorest seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and other individuals. In many communities, the lack of affordable housing for the lowest-income households has led to increased evictions and, in worst cases, homelessness. Despite the clear need, however, just one in four eligible families get the assistance they need to afford a place to call home.

Rural, suburban and urban communities are all impacted by the pervasive housing crisis. According to NLIHC's [research](#), there is a national shortage of 7 million rental homes affordable and available to the nation's 11 million extremely low-income renter households. Fewer than 4 affordable and available rental homes exist for every 10 extremely low-income renter households nationwide. As a result, 8 million of America's poorest households pay at least half of their incomes on rent, forcing them to make impossible choices between paying rent and buying healthy food or needed medication. The majority (87%) of these households are seniors, people with disabilities, or individuals in the low-wage labor force. Every state and congressional district is impacted.

The HTF is the first new federal housing resource in a generation exclusively targeted to build and preserve housing affordable to people with the lowest incomes. Because the HTF is administered as a block grant, each state has the flexibility to decide how to best use HTF resources to address its most pressing housing needs. Most states have chosen to use their HTF investments to build, rehabilitate, or preserve affordable rental housing for extremely low-income veterans, seniors, people with disabilities or special needs, and people experiencing homelessness.

In addition to the critical need to produce more homes for the lowest-income renters, we must also preserve our nation's public housing infrastructure. Public housing is home to nearly 1 million households and plays a critical role in providing safe, decent housing to families with the greatest needs. Significant capital investment is needed, however, for the rehabilitation and preservation of public housing, which provides a stable home to some of the country's most vulnerable renters. Due to decades of declining capital funds, the public housing stock now faces a backlog of capital repair needs of as much as \$70 billion, threatening the quality and even the existence of these homes. As a result, HUD is unable to make the repairs needed to preserve its public housing stock and has lost 10,000 to 15,000 public housing apartments each year to obsolescence or decay.

There is broad support for including funding for the HTF and public housing in an infrastructure bill. Enclosed is a list of the more than [1,900 organizational members of the NLIHC-led Housing Trust Fund campaign](#) calling for an expansion of the HTF, as well as a letter from the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign's multi-sector Steering Committee urging that any infrastructure bill include at least \$5 billion for the HTF and \$15 billion for public housing. The campaign's Steering Committee consists of leading national organizations from an array of sectors – education, health, anti-poverty, civil rights, anti-hunger, child welfare, faith, anti-homelessness, social work, municipal governance, criminal justice, and more. It speaks volumes that these organizations, each with their own concerns and perspectives, are joining forces to advocate for greater affordable housing investments through emerging legislative opportunities like the infrastructure package.

The connection between affordable housing and infrastructure is clear: like roads and bridges, affordable housing is a long-term asset that helps communities and families thrive. Without access to affordable housing, America's lowest-income households will not be able to benefit from any significant investments in transportation and infrastructure. For this reason, NLIHC supports including \$5 billion in the HTF and \$70 billion in public housing capital funds – as included in H.R. 5187 – in any infrastructure package to help ensure affordable and accessible rental homes for households with the lowest incomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diane Yentel".

Diane Yentel
President and CEO