



September 17, 2024

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
568 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Reauthorization of the *Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act*

To Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, House Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), I write to express NLIHC's support for the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act (NAHASDA), and to urge you to act swiftly to reauthorize this important legislation, and to fully fund Tribal housing programs to address the dire affordable housing needs in Native communities.

NLIHC is solely dedicated to achieving racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes have quality homes that are accessible and affordable in communities of their choice. NLIHC members include state and local affordable housing coalitions, residents of public and assisted housing, nonprofit housing providers, homeless service providers, fair housing organizations, researchers, faith-based organizations, public housing agencies, private developers and property owners, local and state government agencies, and concerned citizens. While our members include the spectrum of housing interests, we do not represent any segment of the housing industry. Rather, we work on behalf of and with low-income people who receive federal housing assistance and those in need of it, especially extremely low-income people and people experiencing homelessness.

Originally passed in 1996, NAHASDA is the largest – and in some rural and remote areas, only – source of affordable housing funding for Native communities. Called “the backbone of Indian housing,” NAHASDA grants can be used for affordable housing activities that primarily benefit low-income Indian families living on Indian reservations, Alaska Native communities, or in other Indian areas. Since its creation, Tribes and Alaska Native governments have NAHASDA's Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) funding to build or acquire almost 41,500 affordable homes¹ and restore an additional 105,000 affordable homes² on Tribal lands and in

¹ https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CFO/documents/2023_CJ_Program_Native_American_Programs_updated.pdf

² Ibid.

Alaska Native communities. Despite its critical role, Congress has failed to reauthorize NAHASDA since 2013 and is in dire need of updates to allow Tribes to use its programs more efficiently.

Native Americans living on Tribal lands and in Alaska Native communities – particularly those in rural and remote areas – have some of the most urgent housing needs in the country, and experience high rates of substandard, overcrowded housing. In 2017, HUD found that American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) households experience significantly higher rates of inadequate plumbing, heating deficiencies, and overcrowding than non-Native households.³

Tribal housing advocates have long celebrated the success of NAHASDA and championed its reauthorization. The United Native American Housing Association (UNAHA), NLIHC's first Tribal partner, helped enact NAHASDA in 1996 and has since worked to educate its network of members in the Northern Plains about best practices for implementation, as well as mobilize them to advocate for the bill's continuation and expansion.

In particular, NLIHC and our Tribal partners urge any final bill reauthoring NAHASDA to include the following priorities:

- Permanently authorize the Tribal HUD-VASH demonstration program, which provides housing vouchers and supportive services to Native American veterans.
- Allow Tribal housing projects to use Indian Health Service funds to build needed water and sanitation infrastructure.
- Increase oversight by allowing HUD to expedite suspension of NAHASDA funds if Tribes violate program rules, while allowing a notice and hearing procedures for Tribes to appeal.
- Consolidate and streamline Native housing funds by:
 - Consolidating the number of environmental reviews Tribes must complete for housing projects.
 - Allowing Tribes to use IHBG to assist Tribal members with education-related housing expenses.
 - Streamlining the process for mortgages to receive approval of federal guarantees under the Section 184 Indian Home Loan Guarantee Program and Section 184A Native Hawaiian Housing Loan Guarantee Program.

NAHASDA has helped ensure Native communities can address the housing crisis in their own communities in ways that are most culturally appropriate, and its reauthorization is crucial to the success and effectiveness of its programs. We strongly urge you to reauthorize NAHASDA to address homelessness, overcrowding, and rural community development for Tribes and Alaska Native governments.

For further questions, please contact Sarah Saadian, senior vice president of policy and organizing at ssaadian@nlihc.org and Kayla Laywell, housing policy analyst at klaywell@nlihc.org.

Sincerely,



Diane Yentel
NLIHC President and CEO

³ https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing