



May 6, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to address housing instability in the next coronavirus relief package. **To avert a surge in evictions and homelessness, any comprehensive package must include the “Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act”** proposed by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Congressman Denny Heck (D-WA), and Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA), which would provide \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance.

We applaud Congress for recently enacting the “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)” to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This response package included \$12 billion in needed housing resources for people who are currently experiencing homelessness and people who are now on the brink. This was an important first step, but far more resources are needed.

The nation is experiencing an unprecedented spike in unemployment. Before the pandemic, millions of renters were already precariously housed, and their numbers are likely to grow significantly due to the unemployment spike. In particular, people of color (who experienced disproportionate rates of job, food, and housing instability prior to the outbreak due to a legacy of discrimination) are being hit hardest by the virus and the associated economic shocks. Emergency rental assistance provides direct support and enables people who have lost jobs to shelter in place and avoid housing instability. Temporary moratoria on evictions will help but still allow rent arrears to accumulate. People who have lost income as a result of the coronavirus outbreak will struggle to cover large sums of back-rent once it comes due. During a pandemic, evictions and other types of housing instability worsen public health risks as well as increase hardship for individuals and families, especially children whose lives and learning progress have already been upended by school closures. Our collective health depends on every one of us being safely and affordably housed.

While the CARES Act’s stimulus checks and expanded unemployment benefits will help, they only last a short duration and many people with the greatest needs are facing challenges in accessing these resources. Even if they do receive the unemployment benefits, the vast majority of extremely low income renters will still remain cost-burdened by rent and at-risk of homelessness as they were before the outbreak. Clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic has made these longstanding housing challenges much more urgent. A recent [estimate](#) from the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that \$100 billion is required to keep the lowest-income households stably housed over the next year during and in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, emergency rental assistance is necessary so that landlords continue to receive rental income, which, in turn, enables them to operate their properties and ensures the continued viability of our country’s essential affordable housing infrastructure.

If enacted, the “*Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act*” would provide states, localities, territories, and tribes with flexible resources to provide direct support to households in need with short- and medium-term rental assistance or to cover up to 6 months of back-rent and late fees. The funds may also be used to stabilize households by helping to address the cost of security deposits and utility deposits and payments,



among other expenses. These funds are designed to reach people in need quickly and directly; half of the funds must be allocated to states and local governments within 7 days. The Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program utilized in this legislative proposal was modeled after the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-housing (HPRP) program, which was created and used successfully in the aftermath the 2008 financial crisis.

Thank you for considering our recommendation to include the “*Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act*” in the next coronavirus relief package. We are members of the Steering Committee and Roundtable of the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign, and we stand ready to work with you to ensure that future coronavirus responses include vital housing needs. We come from a wide range of sectors, each with our own perspectives and concerns. Yet we all believe that our own goals are inextricably linked to whether people have access to stable, affordable homes, especially during this unprecedented time.

For further information, please feel free to contact Mike Koprowski, National Director of the Opportunity Starts at Home campaign at mkoprowski@nlihc.org.

Sincerely,

Catholic Charities USA
Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Coalition on Human Needs
Healthcare Anchor Network
Healthy Schools Campaign
Legal Action Center
NAACP
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Social Workers
National Community Action Partnership
National Education Association
National League of Cities

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
Natural Resources Defense Council
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Prosperity Now
RESULTS
StriveTogether
The Catholic Health Association of the United States
The National Women's Law Center
UnidosUS
Unity Health Care
YWCA USA
ZERO TO THREE