

To Members of Congress,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our support for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and to urge Congress to expand this critical resource to at least \$3.5 billion annually in comprehensive housing finance reform legislation, as part of a broader commitment to access and affordability throughout the housing market.

The HTF is the first new federal housing resource in a generation, and it is exclusively targeted to help build and preserve housing that is affordable to people with the lowest incomes. In 2016, the first \$174 million in HTF dollars were allocated to states; in 2017, another \$220 million was allocated. 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 investment to build and preserve affordable rental housing for extremely low income veterans, seniors, people with disabilities or special needs, and people experiencing homelessness. While these initial rounds of funding are an important first step, far more resources are necessary to meet the need.

In every state and community, growing numbers of extremely low income renters are struggling to make ends meet. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there is a shortage of 7.4 million rental homes affordable to the nation's 11.4 million extremely low income renters. This means that for every 100 extremely low income households, there are just 35 rental homes that are affordable and available to them. As a result, 71% of extremely low income households are severely cost burdened, paying more than half of their limited income on rent. These families are forced to make difficult choices between paying rent and buying groceries, seeing a doctor, or saving for college or a rainy day. In the worst cases, they become homeless.

In 2014, Republicans and Democrats on the Senate Banking Committee voted in support of housing finance legislation, known as Johnson-Crapo, which included a provision to increase funding for the HTF to an estimated \$3.5 billion annually, making a significant contribution to ending homelessness and housing poverty without competing with other important HUD programs for appropriated funds. To continue to build bipartisan support for housing finance reform legislation, the HTF must be protected and expanded and the HTF provision included in the Johnson-Crapo bill should be the starting point for any future legislation considered by Congress.

Investments through the HTF are more important now than ever before. We urge you to work with your colleagues to protect and expand the HTF in housing finance reform legislation, as part of a broader commitment to access and affordability throughout the housing market, to serve more families with the greatest needs.

Sincerely,