

September 10, 2018

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing,
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Price, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing,
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing,
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing,
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, Chairman Collins, and Ranking Member Reed:

As you finalize the details of the fiscal year 2019 Transportation-HUD appropriations bill, we urge you include sufficient funds to fully renew Housing Choice Vouchers, expand the availability of vouchers for vulnerable youth, families, and people with disabilities, and to help more families with children to use housing vouchers in opportunity-rich neighborhoods that will improve their children's chances of long-term success. As organizations dedicated to reducing poverty and homelessness, enabling more low-income families and their children to escape poverty and improve their lives, and helping seniors and people with disabilities to live independently with dignity in the communities of their choice, we believe that these investments are critical priorities.

Specifically, we ask that Congress include in the final bill the following provisions, which generally reflect provisions in the bills approved by the House and Senate appropriations committees:

- At least \$20.5 billion for housing voucher renewals, as provided in the Senate bill (S. 3023). This amount, a significant increase above the 2018 funding level, is likely to be necessary to cover increased program costs due to private market rent inflation, as well as the addition of more than 30,000 housing vouchers that will require renewal for the first time next year, including nearly 20,000 new vouchers issued for RAD conversions. In light of the continuing strong demand for rental assistance in communities across the country, it is essential that Congress make it a priority to ensure that existing aid is renewed.
- \$20 million for roughly 2,000 new vouchers under the Family Unification Program, which enables child-welfare-involved families to remain together or to be reunified, as well as to assist vulnerable youth who are exiting foster care. This important investment was included in the Senate bill.
- \$390 million for "mainstream" vouchers for non-elderly people with disabilities (the House bill amount), including roughly \$120 million to renew existing vouchers and \$270 million to make new assistance available to some 30,000 people with disabilities and their families.

- \$45 million for the HUD-VASH program, including \$5 million for tribal VASH, to expand assistance for homeless veterans.
- \$50 million for the Housing Mobility Demonstration (as well as the provisions of Section 238 in the House bill). This provision will provide new vouchers and robust mobility-related services to help low-income families to locate in safer, less poor neighborhoods with quality schools. An increasingly impressive body of research finds that children in poor families who grow up in such neighborhoods are much more likely to succeed as adults, yet too few children in families using housing vouchers are able to do so. This provision is an important step towards expanding such opportunities for children.
- \$80 million for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, as in the Senate bill. This important program, which has a promising track record of helping HUD-assisted families to increase their employment and earnings, deserves increased support in 2019.

We very much appreciate your efforts to provide robust funding for Housing Choice Vouchers in the fiscal year 2018 law, which included the most substantial expansion of rental assistance, particularly for people with disabilities, in more than a decade. (We were pleased to see that HUD recently announced an initial award of nearly 12,000 new mainstream vouchers for people with disabilities that were funded primarily by the 2018 appropriation.) We stand ready to work with you now, and in the future, to strengthen the Housing Choice Voucher and other HUD programs that provide such critical support to the nation's vulnerable individuals and families. If we can be a resource to your office as you prepare the final HUD provisions of the 2019 funding bill, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Catholic Charities USA
 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
 Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force
 CSH
 Enterprise Community Partners
 Low Income Investment Fund
 National Alliance on Mental Illness
 National Alliance to End Homelessness
 National Center for Housing and Child Welfare
 National Health Care for the Homeless Council
 National Housing Law Project
 National Low Income Housing Coalition
 National Network to End Domestic Violence
 Technical Assistance Collaborative