



Working to Reduce Poverty in America

February 5, 2020

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Committee on Financial Services
Chairwoman,
2221 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
Committee on Financial Services
Ranking Member,
2004 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chairwoman Waters and Ranking Member McHenry,

Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) represents 167 nonprofit diocesan Catholic Charities agencies and serves 12.5 million people, including over half a million people to whom Catholic Charities has provided housing and homelessness services. Homelessness continues to impact our country and without swift action from the federal government to support stable housing initiatives more people are susceptible to becoming homeless.

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One of the strongest mechanisms to reduce chronic homelessness is the “Housing First” approach. The Housing First approach maintains that the multiple needs of a family experiencing homelessness can only be adequately addressed when the family has stable and permanent shelter. Once a family is housed, Catholic Charities agencies can then administer holistic case management services to address the full array of needs including mental health, opioid addiction, hunger, and job training. Housing First is an evidence-based approach that has shown long-term housing stability improves physical and behavioral health outcomes and reduces the use of crisis services, such as emergency departments, hospitals, and prisons.¹

The housing crisis exacerbates homelessness due to rising housing costs and income inequality, forcing many families out of stable housing. Catholic social teaching holds that housing is a basic human right. Raising barriers in access to housing distances people from their full development.

I encourage Congress to find bipartisan solutions that adopt the effective Housing First approach to address homelessness. CCUSA is eager to work with Congress to end homelessness in America.

Sincerely,

Sister Donna Markham OP, PhD
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA

¹ Department of Housing and Urban Development: Housing First Models to Homeless Persons with Serious Mental Illness, 2007

