Capitol Hill Day 2017: Congressional Talking Points

Everyone should have a home. Without a home, it is difficult for families to maintain employment and provide for their young children. Homeless children have poor health and school performance, and an increased risk of future homelessness. Without a home, it is challenging for people to address health, mental health, and addiction issues. Many people cycle through costly emergency systems to meet their acute needs. Without a home, youth abandoned by their parents are frequently victims of crimes, including sex trafficking, causing physical harm and trauma. Without a home, life expectancy is shortened.

We know housing is the solution to homelessness. Yet, it is increasingly difficult for Americans to find a stable and affordable home. The affordable housing crisis has grown worse since the end of the recession, despite decreases in unemployment. Rents for modest apartments continue to rise, and incomes at the bottom of the labor market have not kept up. Federal programs that have historically helped fill these gaps are squeezed by tight budgets. The rapid flow of people into homelessness remains a challenge even for communities that have done an excellent job of organizing a system to quickly resolve housing crises. **Increased federal investment is needed.**

McKinney-Vento: Please provide at least $2.6 billion for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program in FY 2018.
- **Need.** Half a million Americans experience homelessness on any given night. *Discuss the need in your community for increased federal homelessness resources.*
- **These programs work.** McKinney-funded emergency shelter, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing models are effectively resolving housing crises and ending homelessness. Since annual counts of people experiencing homelessness began in 2007, homelessness has decreased 15 percent. Communities across the country are announcing they have ended veteran and chronic homelessness. Due to the effectiveness of this program, modest federal investments make significant impacts. *Share the success of local McKinney-funded programs. Explain these models and how they fit in your crisis response system.*
- **Bipartisan support.** This efficient program has a long history of strong, bipartisan support. Ending chronic homelessness was first articulated as a goal by the Republican Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee in the late 1990s, and then again later by the Bush Administration. *Share any examples of bipartisan support on the local level.*

Medicaid: Please protect Medicaid funding that provides essential resources for communities combating chronic homelessness, and is a lifeline for millions of the nation's most vulnerable citizens.
- **Cost-effective.** Medicaid has a 50 year history of effective and efficient coverage that improves health, meets the needs of our nation's most vulnerable citizens, and is in fact far less costly (about 22 percent less) than private coverage for adults with disabilities or those who are living in poverty.
- **Proven to Improve Health.** Research in Medicaid Expansion states has shown that when uninsured rates for low-income populations drop, the share of these patients who have a personal doctor, receive an annual check-up, and report that they are in "excellent" health rises dramatically.
- **Essential to Ending Homelessness.** Medicaid is being used throughout the country to pay for services attached to housing interventions for people with chronic illnesses, and this innovative use of Medicaid dollars has been shown to improve health outcomes and reduce returns to homelessness for individuals accessing homeless services. *Share how Medicaid has helped your community's effort to end homelessness.*

Affordable housing: Please fund mainstream affordable housing programs at the levels necessary to preserve and increase capacity.

- **Scarce.** Despite historic growth in the number of households that struggle to afford rent, only one in four eligible low-income renters receives rental assistance.
- **Stable housing is a platform.** Stable, affordable housing is a basic human need that gives families a solid base for a productive life. Stable housing is important for the education, health, and the wellbeing of children. It increases access to opportunity and improves the ability of low-income people to hold down jobs.
- **Effective.** HUD's programs that provide affordable housing to those with the lowest incomes have stood the test of time and work well in communities. *Explain the role affordable housing plays in ending homelessness in your community and why increased rental assistance is critical.*

USICH: Please preserve and fully fund the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).

- **Unique.** USICH is the only agency at the federal level with the sole responsibility of ending homelessness. It works across 19 federal agencies and departments and with partners in both the public and private sectors to improve the outcomes of federal spending on homelessness.
- **Cost-Effective.** USICH cuts through federal bureaucracy and competing priorities to achieve better outcomes for homeless people. Its work has facilitated the most strategic use of Congressional investments in homeless assistance programs. It also allows communities and states to leverage housing, health, education, and labor funding more strategically and effectively.
- **Smart.** The investment of a few million dollars to coordinate $5 billion in targeted spending and billions more from mainstream programs across 19 federal agencies has helped drive national decreases in homelessness and should continue. *Explain how USICH has helped your community end homelessness.*