***Place on letterhead and try to personalize as much as possible. Try to keep it 1- 1 ½ pages long.***

(Date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

U.S. Senate

Washington, DC 20510

Attn: \_\_\_ (the DC staff person who works on housing/homelessness issues)

Dear Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

On behalf of (organization), I urge you to support a funding level of [$2.664 billion for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program in FY 2017](http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/McKinney-Vento%20Needs%20An%20Increase_FY%2017.pdf) in order to end chronic homelessness [while saving taxpayers money](http://www.endhomelessness.org/page/-/files/Cost%20Savings%20from%20PSH_one-pager_FY17_2.pdf) and make significant progress to end homelessness among families and youth. I also urge you to support a funding level of $20.854 billion for the Section 8 Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program to help address the dearth of available affordable housing and house homeless families. This will allow us to replicate the success we’ve already seen in communities that are declaring an end to veteran homelessness, where modest Congressional investments have the country on the verge of solving this problem.

Due to inadequate investments by Congress to meet increased housing needs for other populations - fueled largely by the widening gap between the rising costs of rent throughout the economic recovery and relatively stagnant incomes at the bottom of the labor market - we have not seen nearly the same extent of progress in ending homelessness for chronically homeless people with disabilities, families, or youth. Yes, the discretionary budget is extremely tight and in an election year there are political considerations at hand. Yet, as Pope Francis said in Washington, D.C. last fall, there is “no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for lack of housing.” We hope that you will show your support for our efforts to end homelessness in (community) by **signing the Dear Colleague letter Senators Jeff Merkley and Kirsten Gillibrand are circulating requesting $2.664 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants and $20.854 billion for the Section 8 TBRA program in FY 2017 and/or by submitting programmatic requests to the HUD Appropriations Subcommittee in support of those funding levels.**

This $414 million increase to $2.664 billion for homeless assistance would provide enough funding to end chronic homelessness and make important progress toward ending homelessness for families and youth. It would:

* Provide enough new permanent supportive housing to house tens of thousands of homeless people with mental illness and other disabilities, and finally **end chronic homelessness** – a goal that was first articulated in 2003 by the Bush Administration.
* **Rapidly re-house 8,000 homeless families.**
* **Expand new initiatives** in the enacted FY 2017 spending bill **to jumpstart work on ending homelessness for youth** who are on their own and homeless.

The $20.854 billion for TBRA would renew vouchers currently in use **to continue assistance for all families currently using the program** and **provide 10,000 new vouchers to homeless families with children**.

Ending homelessness is very important to (community), and is truly an all-hands-on-deck community effort. Please include one or two local talking points about community involvement to end homelessness (i.e. mayoral, business, or philanthropic involvement, massive turnout for the annual Point-in-Time count, local press coverage, preferences of homeless people for vouchers, etc.). If your community has seen sharp declines in homelessness among any population, please describe the results of collective efforts.

However, **we need your help!** At current funding levels, our effective programs are unable to operate at the capacity necessary to meet the great need of people experiencing housing crises in (community). Due in large part to the failure of the federal government to put the necessary funding on the table in recent years, our homeless assistance programs and Public Housing Authorities (which administer TBRA Vouchers) have already had to make extremely difficult decisions about whom to serve, and will continue to face turning people away if a sufficient federal investment is not provided in FY 2017. *Optional:* Add a story about a difficult decision your community made about who to serve; data on the number of people still homeless in your community; the number of known people who passed away while experiencing homelessness last year; or information on the lengths of your waitlists for shelter or vouchers, here.

**I hope we can count on you to sign on to Senator Merkley’s Dear Colleague letter and/or submit a programmatic request to the HUD Appropriations Subcommittee in support of providing $2.664 billion for HUD’s Homeless Assistance Grants and $20.854 billion for Section 8 TBRA in FY 2017.** Failing to follow through with the funding necessary to reach these goals would result in less leveraged local funding in (community), and worsen (community)’s affordable housing crisis.

Thank you in advance for taking this request to be a champion for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in (community) into thoughtful consideration. I will be in touch shortly to follow up on this request. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at (phone/email) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

(name/title)