

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

[[DATE]]

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
2358-A RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing,
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
2083 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member Quigley:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide \$3.8 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants (HAG) program, which includes the Continuum of Care (COC) and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG).

According to HUD's 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, 582,000 individuals were homeless across our nation on any given night.¹ Compared to 2020, the report noted increases in individual homelessness of 3.1% and unsheltered homelessness of 3.4%; worse, there was a 15.6% increase in chronic homelessness, people who have been unsheltered for an extended period and suffer from one or more morbidities—a physical ailment, a mental illness, or a substance use problem.² It should be noted that many people who are categorized as chronically homeless experienced mental illness or a substance use problem only after they became homeless.

However, the AHAR also reported a 6.1% decline in homelessness among families with children, a 12% decline in unaccompanied youth homelessness, and an 11.1% decline in veteran homelessness.³ Not coincidentally, significant resources have been expended to reduce homelessness in these three categories. As the Biden Administration noted in its FY23 budget proposal, “For veterans and families experiencing homelessness, investments in permanent supportive housing (PSH) and rapid re-housing (RRH) have helped reduce homelessness, even as housing costs in most of the country for low-income people have risen dramatically... On average, much less assistance is provided to individuals who are not veterans or accompanied by children. As a result, rising numbers are experiencing homelessness and particularly unsheltered homelessness.”

The combination of a nationwide shortage of affordable housing and higher rent prices is leaving millions of Americans vulnerable to homelessness. To combat this, state and local governments depend on McKinney-Vento programs like the Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Emergency Solutions Grant

¹ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022, December). *The 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

(ESG) programs. HUD's CoC and ESG programs are used successfully by state and local governments, as well as an extensive network of providers of shelter and housing services, to reduce homelessness. The CoC and ESG programs fund services for people at risk of, and currently experiencing homelessness, including the development and operation of shelters, outreach efforts to identify unsheltered homeless families and individuals, rapid rehousing (RRH), permanent supportive housing (PSH), and homelessness prevention. RRH emphasizes housing search and relocation services, and short- and medium-term rental assistance to move homeless families and individuals (with or without a disability) as rapidly as possible into permanent housing. PSH is housing assistance paired with supportive services, formulated to assist homeless persons with a disability, or families with a disabled adult, achieve housing stability.

For over a decade, federal policy has emphasized the effectiveness of Housing First, an evidence-based, system-wide approach to homelessness. This approach connects people back to a home as quickly as possible, while making readily available the wraparound services (case management, counseling, healthcare, treatment, and job training) that people may need to be stable and secure. Housing First is the best way to permanently house people, put them in a position to address any underlying issues, and help communities avoid costs associated with homelessness, including law enforcement, emergency healthcare, and corrections costs.

Additional funding will help keep up the progress being made across our nation in combatting homelessness and continue to support the nonprofits, community action programs, and faith-based groups that partner with state and local governments through these McKinney-Vento programs. Additional funding will also help ensure that these partners can continue to recruit and retain front-line homelessness services workers who are critical to the success of these efforts.

Given the nation's affordable housing crisis, strong funding for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program is necessary to help get more people into permanent housing. Therefore, we ask that you provide at least \$3.8 billion, an approximate increase of \$84 million from the President's budget request, for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program in FY24.

Thank you for considering this important request and for your continued leadership in helping to prevent and end homelessness in the United States.

[[CLOSING]]

[[SIGNATURES]]

⁴ National Health Care for the Homeless Council. (2019, February). *Homelessness & Health: What's the Connection?* <https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/homelessness-and-health.pdf>