

April 8, 2020

The Hon. Dr. Benjamin Carson
Secretary
US Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Carson:

I write with urgency to ask you to cancel the 2020 Continuum of Care (CoC) funding competition. This will relieve communities across the country -- that are struggling to save the lives of tens of thousands of homeless people -- from having to divert their attention to the time- and labor-intensive task of responding to the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Not coincidentally, it would also relieve your own staff from having to prepare for the 2020 CoC Program NOFA, and from then having to consider the applications -- also at a time when they have urgently important work to do fighting the pandemic. I would propose, instead, that you provide the 2020 funds to the recipients of 2019 funding, perhaps with a percentage measure of flexibility for communities to shift resources to address needs.

Along with you and bipartisan majorities in Congress, the Alliance believes that the competitive nature of the CoC program has been key to its success -- ensuring that the program achieves outcomes and utilizes best practices, while also allowing for local control and prioritization of needs. By no means would we recommend that the competitive NOFA process be abandoned.

However, the capacity of the homelessness sector to meet the needs of the homeless population is insufficient at the best of times, as evidenced by the 37 percent of homeless people who are unsheltered. And this is clearly not the best of times. It is much more important that we use whatever resources can be mustered to help homeless people survive the current health crisis. Any impact on the outcomes of the CoC program (and it is likely to be minimal) can be remedied at a later date.

Mr. Secretary, I know that you share my deep concern that, as a nation, we do everything we can to end the tragedy of homelessness. In this case, I strongly believe that the best thing we can do is to forgo the 2020 NOFA and let communities, and your own staff, continue uninterrupted their heroic work to save the lives of our nation's homeless population in the face of the pandemic. I hope you will agree.

Sincerely,



Nan Roman
President and CEO