

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20005

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20010

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20005

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20010

August 5, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer:

We are writing to you as former Executive Directors of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) to express our deep concern about the need for additional federal investments to address the intersecting crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and homelessness in our country. We are each still deeply engaged in efforts to prevent and end homelessness, and to respond to the impacts of COVID-19, and we can directly attest to the challenges being faced by communities and, most especially, by people experiencing homelessness themselves.


We are writing to express the importance of the emergency coronavirus legislation being developed in Congress including \$11.5 billion for HUD's Homeless Assistance account. These resources are essential to help communities provide safe and healthy sheltering and rehousing options for people currently experiencing homelessness, who are at high risk of contracting this disease and experiencing its worst outcomes, including long hospitalization and death. The same longstanding racial inequities that result in overrepresentation of Black, Latinx, and American Indian / Alaska Native people among those experiencing homelessness are evidenced by the racially inequitable impacts of this pandemic. Congress has the important opportunity to take action to protect people's lives and to prevent increases in homelessness that will otherwise only further these existing disparities.

The needs are great - and the needs are most definitely continuing. Community leaders across the country have responded heroically to these needs, striving to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and to deconcentrate existing shelter environments and better protect staff and clients, to create new shelter and isolation options in safer non-congregate settings, and to increase exits from homelessness to housing. Homelessness response systems that are always overstretched are being stretched and strained even further, and the ability of communities to sustain, much less scale up, these essential efforts is gravely threatened. The \$4 billion included in the CARES Act was critically important – but it will not be enough.

The \$11.5 billion included in the House's Heroes Act closes the gap between what has already been appropriated and the careful estimates of needs performed by leading homelessness researchers, such as Dr. Dennis Culhane of the University of Pennsylvania, and by the leading national organizations focused on preventing and ending homelessness. These resources are an essential complement to the \$100 billion for rental assistance that is also included in the Heroes Act and that is needed to protect families from eviction and the associated harmful impacts, including the risk of becoming homeless.

Thank you for your continued efforts to protect people experiencing homelessness during this continuing national crisis. Please let us know if there is additional information that we can provide or other ways that we can be of assistance to you in your efforts.

Sincerely,



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Currently Matthew Doherty Consulting  
Hyattsville, MD



Laura Zeilinger  
Former USICH Executive Director (2014 – 2015)  
Current Director, District of Columbia  
Department of Human Services  
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Barbara Poppe  
Former USICH Executive Director (2009 – 2014)  
Currently Barbara Poppe and Associates  
Columbus, OH



Fred Karnas  
Former USICH Executive Director (1995-2001)  
Current Senior Fellow, Richmond Memorial  
Health Foundation  
Richmond, VA

c.c.:

The Honorable Nita Lowey  
Chairwoman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H-307 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20005

The Honorable Kay Granger  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1036 Longworth House Office Building  
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The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
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The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
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