

August 6, 2020

Hon. Susan Collins
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Hon. Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development
United States Senate
Washington, DC

Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Reed and Members of the Subcommittee:

The undersigned organizations write to ask you to ensure that the emergency coronavirus legislation currently being developed in Congress include \$11.5 billion for HUD's Homeless Assistance account, to help communities address the grave danger that people face from the intersecting crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and homelessness.

The organizations represented in this letter share the understanding that people who experience homelessness are at high risk of contracting this disease and experiencing its worst outcomes, including long hospitalization and death. We are deeply concerned that the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness did not take the severity of this situation into account in its recently released report on coronavirus, because our information both from the field and from research experts indicates that this continues to be a dangerous situation in communities across the country that is not nearly resolved. Expert research indicates that people who are homeless will be twice as likely to be hospitalized, two to four times as likely to require critical care, and two to three times as likely to die as the general population as a result of the pandemic.

Dr. Dennis Culhane of the University of Pennsylvania is one of the nation's leading researchers on homelessness, and someone whose insights Congress has relied on repeatedly in developing policy in his area. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Dr. Culhane convened a group of experts to estimate the pandemic's impacts. The group's conclusions were that between \$11.25 and \$13 billion will be necessary to keep homeless people safe, largely to develop new shelters to get people who are living outside off the streets, to provide adequate space for social distancing, and to isolate people who have the disease. By our research, an additional \$4 billion will be needed to quickly get the most vulnerable homeless people out of shelters and hotels, off the street, and into housing.

We know that these approaches can work when executed in compliance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For example, Pine Street Inn in Boston recently [reported](#) that they were able to decrease the rate of residents testing positive for COVID-19 from 36% earlier in the pandemic to 2% after implementation of non-congregate shelter options, social distancing, depopulation and other measures, including masks and handwashing. But we can only scale these

important efforts adequately with additional resources. Without the resources we need to implement these practices and get people off the street, the effects will be devastating.

The CARES Act included \$4 billion for these purposes. We are grateful for this initial funding, which has now been allocated by HUD and is being used. But it is clearly not enough. The \$11.5 billion included in the House's HEROES Act closes the gap between what has already been appropriated and our careful estimate of needs. As case numbers and deaths grow around the country, we regard it as essential that Congress include this funding.

Sincerely,

A Way Home America
Community Solutions
Funders Together to End Homelessness
Heartland Alliance
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Homelessness Law Center
National Innovation Service
National Low Income Housing Coalition
True Colors United
Youth Collaboratory

Cc: Staff