



## For Immediate Release

### Statement in Response to USICH's "Expanding the Toolbox" Report

**October 20, 2020, Washington, D.C.** – This week, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the Federal agency tasked with coordinating the national effort to end homelessness, released its new strategic plan, entitled **Expanding the Toolbox: The Whole-of-Government Response to Homelessness**. Unfortunately, the document is neither strategic nor a plan, despite the urgency for both given the rising levels of homelessness during the Trump administration.

The document contains an extensive, inaccurate, and largely incomprehensible analysis of homelessness and the federal efforts to address it. Although many of the "strategic actions" that it offers (including employment, housing, prevention, trauma-informed care) have the potential to be helpful, the document does not suggest any federal responsibility or strategy for the implementation of these actions.

The plan takes particularly perplexing aim at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Housing First funding. Housing First is an evidence-based and proven strategy that involves getting homeless people quickly back into housing and offering, though not requiring, services. The authors blame Housing First for the rise in unsheltered homelessness without citing any evidence to establish such a connection. Meanwhile, the authors enthusiastically praise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs, which reduced veteran homelessness, including unsheltered homelessness, by more than half. VA specifically attributes this success to Housing First.

The report follows [a series of harmful policy decisions by this administration](#) that have undermined efforts to promote fairness and equity in homelessness and housing services. Collectively, they symbolize a retreat from the Federal government's leadership role in the effort to end homelessness.

"It is obvious that homelessness is a critical problem in the nation. Homeless programs, including those funded by the federal government, are housing more people than ever. But they can't keep up with the number of people who are becoming homeless because rents are rising faster than incomes," said Nan Roman, President & CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness. "Those on the frontlines could accomplish so much more with the help of a clear federal plan and set of strategies, like Housing First, based on evidence and supported by leadership whose only commitment is to ending homelessness."

#### **About the National Alliance to End Homelessness**

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit, non-partisan, organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. As a leading voice on the issue of homelessness, the Alliance analyzes policy and develops pragmatic, cost-effective policy solutions; works collaboratively with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to build state and local capacity;

and provides data and research to policymakers and elected officials in order to inform policy debates and educate the public and opinion leaders nationwide.

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