

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 30, 2020

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing, and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing, and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed,

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2021 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide \$3.1 billion for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants and \$25.9 billion for Tenant-Based “Section 8” Rental Assistance. Strong support for these two vital programs is critical to maintaining the progress already made by proven solutions, and continuing the bipartisan effort to fight homelessness across the country.

Communities around the country have made significant progress toward ending veteran and chronic homelessness—and in decreasing family homelessness—largely due to funding that Congress has made available through McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants and Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers. McKinney-funded rapid re-housing has also proven to be an effective intervention to get youth off the streets and on the road to self-sufficiency.

Across the nation, many providers of services to those experiencing homelessness in every Continuum of Care are using the Housing First approach to get their clients off the streets and into housing so they can address their problems effectively. Housing First promotes better outcomes for those experiencing homelessness, including improved medical and behavioral health and lower rates of substance abuse, as well as reducing costs to taxpayers related to emergency health care, police, and incarceration services – improving outcomes for clients and reducing costs for taxpayers. The Housing First approach has enjoyed strong, bipartisan support since its adoption by the George W. Bush Administration at the request of Congressional Republicans and Democrats alike. The Housing First principles also animate the HUD-VASH and Supportive Services for Veterans Families programs that have achieved significant reductions in veteran homelessness.

However, there is still much work to be done. The 2019 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress found that on any given night, over 567,715 people were homeless in America. Over 171,670 of those were in families, including children, and 35,038 were people under 25. When children and youth experience homelessness they are at greater risk for mental and physical

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health issues, and may experience long-term academic challenges. Families experiencing homelessness struggle to maintain employment, and those fighting health, mental health, and addiction issues lack the housing stability needed to adequately address their problems.

We urge the committee to provide \$3.1 billion to McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants in FY2021. This would allow HUD to fund effective rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, and other crisis response programs to the capacities needed to build on demonstrated progress toward ending homelessness. This would bring us closer to ending homelessness for families, unaccompanied youth, and individuals.

Providing \$25.9 billion for Section 8 TBRA, including \$22.7 billion to renew all current vouchers and \$2.55 billion for administrative fees, would ensure that every single voucher currently in circulation will be renewed for FY2021 and the program continues to function. The request also includes \$180 million for 17,000 new housing vouchers to reduce homelessness and help families at risk of having their children placed into foster care due to a lack of affordable housing. Assisted households' have an average income of just \$14,500, well below the federal poverty line; and nearly all of them include the elderly, people with disabilities, or children. Research shows that housing vouchers reduce poverty, homelessness, and other hardships, and can provide a platform for low-income children to improve their lives over the long term. We strongly urge the subcommittee to provide robust funding for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants and for Section 8 TBRA to help ensure that every American has a safe, stable place to call home. Thank you for considering this important request and for your continuing leadership in helping to prevent and end homelessness in the United States.

Sincerely,

Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley
Senator Thomas R. Carper
Senator Catherine Cortez Masto
Senator Jeanne Shaheen
Senator Benjamin L. Cardin
Senator Tammy Duckworth
Senator Jacky Rosen
Senator Angus S. King, Jr.
Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Chris Van Hollen
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Senator Elizabeth Warren
Senator Ed Markey
Senator Tim Kaine
Senator Gary C. Peters
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse
Senator Maria Cantwell

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Senator Bernard Sanders
Senator Chris Murphy
Senator Diane Feinstein
Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Mazie Hirono
Senator Tammy Duckworth
Senator Sherrod Brown
Senator Tammy Baldwin
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Tom Udall
Senator Martin Heinrich
Senator Michael Bennet
Senator Maggie Hassan
Senator Debbie Stabenow
Senator Tina Smith
Senator Kamala D. Harris
Senator Dick Durbin
Senator Robert B. Casey, Jr.
Senator Mark R. Warner
Senator Kyrsten Sinema
Senator Christopher A. Coons