

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2020

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
H- 307
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
404 CHOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grant Programs

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to support the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s Homeless Assistance Grant programs by funding these programs at \$3.1 billion. We have seen that this program is effective at alleviating homelessness.

According to the most recent Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, released December 2019, there are an estimated 567,715 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in America. This includes 171,670 people in families (including children), 35,038 unaccompanied homeless youth, and 96,141 chronically homeless individuals.

Without a stable home, children and youth face challenges in school, unaccompanied youth face an increased risk of being trafficked, families struggle to maintain employment, and those fighting health, mental health, and addiction issues lack the support to adequately address their problems. Because homelessness leads many people to cycle through costly emergency systems and shortens life expectancy, it is good public policy to put resources toward helping people get stable housing.

For over a decade, federal policy has emphasized the effectiveness of Housing First, an evidence-based, system-wide approach to homelessness. Housing First is a homeless assistance strategy that prioritizes access to permanent housing without preconditions and barriers to entry, such as sobriety, absence of a criminal record, treatment, or service participation requirements. Moreover, Housing First combines housing assistance with supportive housing services for individuals and families, including medical and mental health support services, employment or job training services, and financial assistance related services (e.g., help with credit history, arrears, and legal issues). A core principle of Housing First is respect

of individuals' rights to self-determination. While participation in services is encouraged, it is not a condition of housing. Supportive services are offered to maximize housing stability and prevent returns to homelessness. The Housing First approach promotes flexible and responsive assistance that is targeted to a household's specific housing and service needs.

Chairman and Ranking Member, we respectfully ask you to continue to uphold evidence-based, non-punitive strategies and practices in law, as described in your January letter to Executive Director, Dr. Roger G. Marbut, Jr. of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. Housing First is a proven method to address homelessness and has garnered bipartisan support in an effort to confront chronic and youth homelessness. In fact, individuals who are placed in homes as opposed to jails, emergency departments, or other public services allow taxpayers to save millions of dollars. Providing people experiencing homelessness with the safety and stability of a home establishes a foundation on which they can address the issues contributing to their economic hardship, pursue personal goals, and improve their quality of life.

While homelessness rose slightly nationally last year, almost three-fifths of all states experienced declines. The progress made since the 1987 enactment of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act demonstrates that we can successfully lower the rate of homelessness when we invest federal resources and effectively leverage them with local leadership and private funding.

Fighting homelessness is a bipartisan issue and it is critical that we build on the progress we've made to date. Again, we request that you fund HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants Program at \$3.1 billion in FY 2021. This requested increase takes into account rising housing costs that we must address in our efforts to ensure that all families, unaccompanied youth, and individuals who are facing homelessness in the United States will have a 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,



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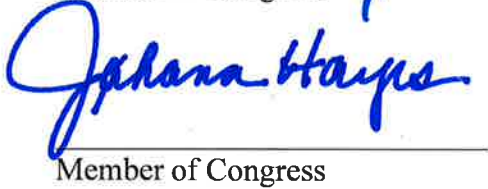

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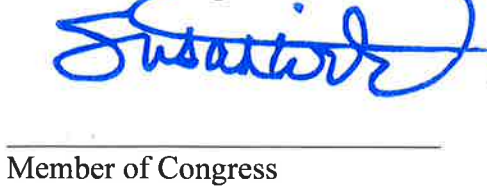

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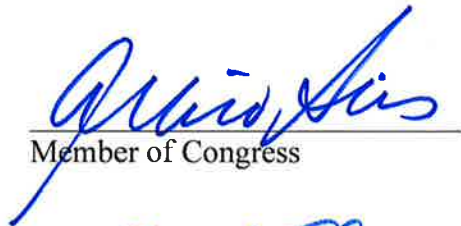

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