

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

[[DATE]]

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
2358-A RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing,
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
374 CHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide \$3.6 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program.

According to HUD's 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, the number of sheltered individuals identified as chronically homeless increased by 20 percent between 2020 and 2021.¹ Additionally, the report found that while there was an overall decrease in the number of people staying in sheltered locations (i.e.: emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens), more than 326,000 people are still experiencing sheltered homelessness in the United States on any given night.²

The 2020 AHAR states that the year 2020 marked the first time since data collection began that more individuals experiencing homelessness were unsheltered than were sheltered, and the number of unsheltered people in families with children increased.³ Due to the circumstances of the pandemic, HUD was unable to provide an accurate count of those experiencing unsheltered homelessness for the last year, but experts believe that unsheltered homelessness has likely increased.

The combination of a nationwide shortage of affordable housing and higher rent prices is leaving millions of Americans vulnerable to homelessness. To combat this, state and local governments depend on HUD programs like the HAG Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs. These programs are successfully used by state and local governments, as well as an extensive network of providers of shelter and housing services in hundreds of communities, to reduce homelessness.

¹ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022, February). *The 2021 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2021-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

² Ibid

The CoC and ESG programs help to fund services for people at risk of, and currently experiencing, homelessness, whether by non-profits, community action programs, faith-based groups, government agencies, or other providers. The activities supported by these programs include the development and operation of shelters, outreach efforts to identify unsheltered homeless families and individuals, rapid re-housing (RRH), permanent supportive housing (PSH), and homelessness prevention. RRH emphasizes housing search and relocation services, and short- and medium-term rental assistance to move homeless families and individuals (with or without a disability) as rapidly as possible into permanent housing. PSH is housing assistance paired with supportive services, formulated to assist homeless persons with a disability, or families with an adult or child with a disability, achieve housing stability.

For over a decade, federal policy has emphasized the effectiveness of Housing First, an evidence-based, system-wide approach to homelessness. This approach connects people back to a home as quickly as possible, while making readily available the wraparound services (including case management, counseling, healthcare, treatment, and job training) that people may need to be stable and secure. Housing First is the best way to permanently house people, put them in the position to address any underlying issues, and help communities avoid costs associated with homelessness, including law enforcement, emergency healthcare, and corrections costs.

Without stable homes, children and youth face challenges in school, adults struggle to maintain employment, and those battling physical and mental health disorders, as well as substance abuse, lack the support they need to adequately address and treat these issues. Additionally, people who are homeless have higher rates of illness and die on average 12 years sooner than the general U.S. population.⁴ Homelessness poses significant threats to not only public health, but the health and wellbeing of our most at risk populations.

Given the lack of affordable housing across the nation and the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, strong funding for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program is necessary to avoid increases in homelessness and to get more people off the streets and into permanent housing. Therefore, we ask that you provide at least \$3.6 billion for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program in FY23.

Thank you for considering this important request and for your continued leadership in helping to prevent and end homelessness in the United States.

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[[SIGNATURES]]

³ The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2021, January). *The 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2020-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

⁴ National Health Care for the Homeless Council. (2019, February). *Homelessness & Health: What's the Connection?* <https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/homelessness-and-health.pdf>