

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2024

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
2358-A RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing,
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
2083 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member Quigley:

As you develop the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide \$4.75 billion for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants (HAG) program, which includes the Continuum of Care (COC) and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG).

This funding will help keep up the progress being made across our nation in combatting homelessness and continue to support the nonprofits, community action programs, and faith-based groups that partner with state and local governments through these McKinney-Vento programs. It will also help ensure that these partners can continue to recruit and retain front-line homelessness services workers who are critical to the success of these efforts.

According to HUD's 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, 653,100 individuals were homeless across our nation on any given night.¹ This is the highest number of people reported as experiencing homelessness on a single night since Point-in-Time (PIT) count reporting began in 2007.² The 2023 AHAR report noted an overall increase in individual homelessness by 12.1% from 2022 to 2023, just a one-year span. Further, the number of families experiencing homelessness increased by 16% between 2022 and 2023, the end of a downward trend in this demographic that began in 2012.³ Homelessness has risen consistently each year since 2016, apart from the years 2020 to 2022, when pandemic-era protections paused evictions and increased financial assistance.⁴ As these protections have been eased, data has shown that homelessness has continued to increase among all groups.

¹ The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR to Congress) Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2023 (huduser.gov)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2023, December). Health. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/health/>

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, as well as an extensive network of providers of shelter and housing services, depend on McKinney-Vento programs like the Continuum of Care (CoC) and the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs. HUD's CoC and ESG are the centerpiece of their efforts to reduce homelessness.

The CoC and ESG programs fund services for people at risk of, and currently experiencing homelessness, including the development and operation of shelters, outreach efforts to identify unsheltered homeless families and individuals, rapid rehousing (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 a disabled adult, achieve housing stability.

Homelessness disproportionately impacts racial and ethnic minorities and veterans, exacerbating social, economic, and health disparities among these groups. Between 2022 and 2023, homelessness among Latino and Asian populations saw significant spikes, increasing by 28% and 40%, respectively.⁵ Veterans experiencing homelessness increased by 7%, now representing 22 of every 10,000 veterans in the United States.⁶

Health and homelessness are inextricably linked; chronic health conditions or crises can prompt homelessness, and homelessness can magnify existing health conditions. People experiencing homelessness are disproportionately likely to have comorbidities including mental illness, substance use disorders, and chronic illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS.⁷ A combination of housing and support services has been proven as a cost-effective solution to improve overall health.⁸

Homelessness has been increasingly criminalized by laws restricting the ability of people to engage in life-sustaining activities.⁹ The penalization of daily behaviors (including sleeping, sitting, and requesting donations) compounded with a lack of sustainable alternatives for people experiencing homelessness makes it difficult for people to secure housing, employment, and other resources.¹⁰ Instead of relying on punitive measures, it is necessary to invest in evidence-backed programs and policies that provide social support services to people experiencing homelessness.

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

⁵ The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR to Congress) Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2023 (huduser.gov)

⁶ The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR to Congress) Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2023 (huduser.gov)

⁷ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2023, December). Health. <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/health>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2021, June). Is Being Homeless a Crime? <https://endhomelessness.org/blog/is-being-homeless-a-crime/>

¹⁰ Ibid.

possible, while making readily available the wraparound services (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 a position to address any underlying issues, and help communities avoid costs associated with homelessness, including law enforcement, emergency healthcare, and corrections costs.

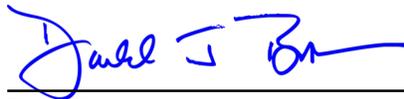
Given the nation's affordable housing crisis, strong funding for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program is necessary to help get more people into permanent housing. Therefore, we ask that you provide at least \$4.75 billion for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program in FY25.

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

Sincerely,



Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Don Bacon
Member of Congress



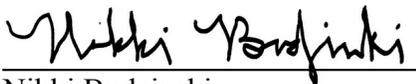
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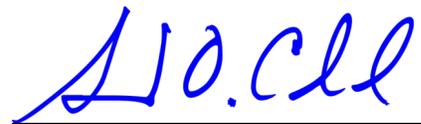
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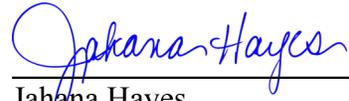
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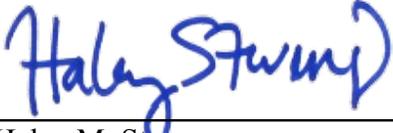
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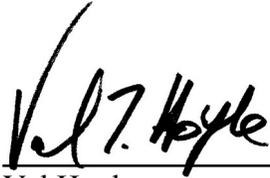
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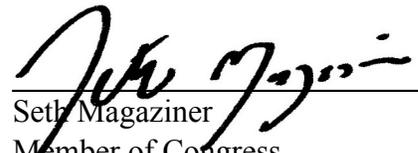
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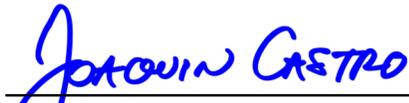
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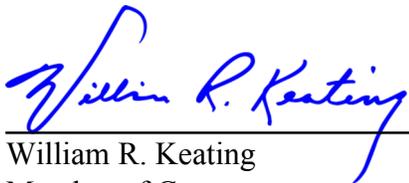
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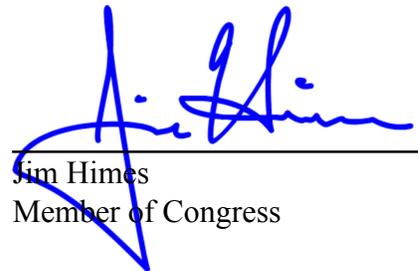
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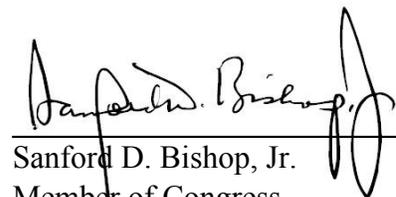
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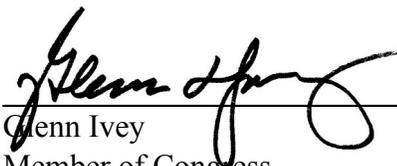
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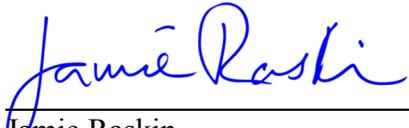
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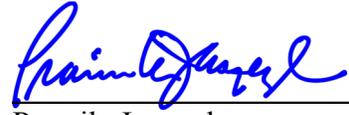
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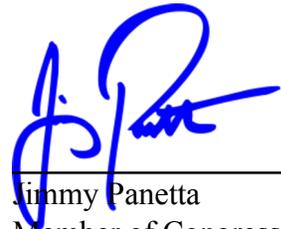
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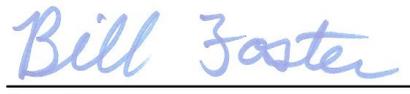
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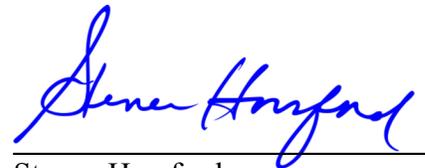
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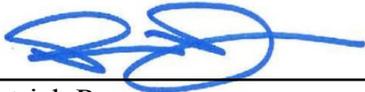
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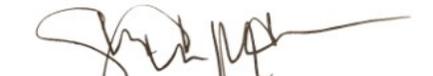
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Kathy Manning
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Maxine Waters
Ranking Member, Committee
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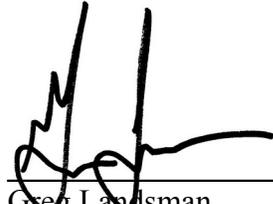
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