

MESSAGING GUIDANCE: HOMELESS ASSISTANCE GRANTS PROGRAMS

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The HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants (HAG) account funds the primary federal programs to address homelessness: the Continuum of Care (CoC) program and the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program.

- The CoC Program funds permanent housing, supportive services, data collection, and overall community-wide planning and coordination.
- The ESG program funds emergency shelters, essential services, street outreach, re-housing of homeless individuals and families, and homelessness prevention.

The HAG account supports a nationwide network of state, local, charitable, and faith-based providers working in collaboration to prevent and end homelessness for all Americans. This includes unaccompanied youth, older adults, families, veterans, and domestic violence survivors.

■ Topline Talking Points

- Congress can help communities respond to homelessness in FY26 with a [total appropriation of \\$4.922 BILLION for the Homeless Assistance Grants program](#). That's a \$867 MILLION **INCREASE** from FY25 to meet rising demand. Only \$410 million of the total request represents new funding.
 - **\$652 MILLION MORE FOR THE CONTINUUM OF CARE PROGRAM TO:**
 - **ACCOUNT FOR FAIR MARKET RENT (FMR) INCREASES IN FY25 AND FY26:** Inflation and rising FMRs impact renewal costs for existing projects in FY25, and likely in FY26, resulting in higher program costs.
 - **RECOVER FROM FY25 FUNDING LOSS:** The year-long Continuing Resolution creates a **\$150–200 MILLION SHORTFALL** in FY25, threatening to eliminate housing assistance for at least 18,500 households.
 - **ALLOW FOR COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS FOR FRONTLINE STAFF:** Our workforce is underpaid, overworked, and often unable to pay their own rents. A **\$50 MILLION BOOST** will ensure a living wage for this vital workforce. The Alliance thanks the Senate Appropriations Committee for setting aside \$47 million for this purpose in its FY25 bill.
 - **ALLOCATE NEW FUNDING TO CREATE PROJECTS TO SERVE PRIORITY POPULATIONS:** Adding **\$150 MILLION** for new projects targeted at one or more priority populations based on community-specific needs. While the use of these funds should be locally determined, Congress should prioritize youth, survivors of domestic violence, older adults, and people with complex behavioral health needs.

- **\$210 MILLION MORE FOR THE EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANTS PROGRAM TO:**
 - **RESPOND TO THE NATIONWIDE RISE IN UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS:** Unsheltered homelessness rose by 6.9% overall, but 19.1% in largely suburban communities and 17.8% in largely rural areas.
 - Additional ESG investments will help communities move more people into shelter and also to move people directly into housing. This will reduce the visibility of unsheltered homelessness.
 - **ENSURE THAT EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATIONS MEET EVOLVING NEEDS:** Communities need more funds to modernize emergency shelters so they can move more people off the streets and better serve older adults and people with disabilities.
- Congress should reject any policy riders (tactics used to add a controversial provision into an appropriations bill as a way to try to force potential opponents into passing it in order to move forward the package as a whole) that would limit or restrict access to HUD's homeless assistance grants programs.
 - Specifically, representatives in the House should not include Sections 422 and 425 from the House bill in the conference report. These provisions would require frontline staff to police the gender identity of people in crisis who are seeking assistance. They would also allow housing providers to discriminate against applicants and program participants who are LGBTQIA+ without risk of losing their funding. During this crisis, we must remove — not create — barriers to getting people off the streets.
 - Further, representatives should not include House Section 236 from the House bill in the conference report. This provision would allow HUD to deny funds to cities that limit their cooperation with federal immigration enforcement because they are "sanctuary cities". This would have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable households in a community, especially those who are experiencing homelessness. It would allow a highly politicized issue to be weaponized against cities who disagree with administration on a locally decided issue.

Tailored Messaging Prompts

- Positive impacts that the CoC and ESG Programs have had in your district and state (including individual stories of success).
- Data about the people that are assisted in your district and state:
 - Number of people currently housed in RRH and PSH
 - Number of emergency shelter beds
 - Number of people seeking assistance each week vs. what is available
 - Shelter and housing gaps in your state ([Homelessness Assistance Per State](#)) and your CoC ([Homelessness Assistance by Continuum of Care](#)).
- Successful strategies that have been implemented as a result of these programs in your district and state.
- Successes in reducing homelessness overall and/or for specific subpopulations.

- The impact of funding cuts,
 - Share what a 5% or 10% cut would look like for your community.
 - Share what more you would be able to accomplish if funding was increased by 5%, by 10%.
- Examples of successful person centered and non-punitive community partnerships (especially with faith-based organizations or law enforcement organizations)
- Success stories of using Housing First and low barrier community-based approaches.
- Capacity challenges for providers resulting from insufficient budgets, such as high staff turn-over, limited capacity for training, and high caseloads.