



Advocacy Guide on FY2025 CoC Program Funding

This guidebook is intended to provide those working to end homelessness with comprehensive guidance and resources to advance and strengthen their advocacy efforts regarding the FY2025 Continuum of Care (CoC) Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). It highlights key Congressional committees and advocacy targets, offers guidance on effective strategies, and includes outreach tools and resources to support effective engagement. You are encouraged to use the table of contents below to navigate to the background or resource that you need.

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Background

What is the Continuum of Care Program & How Is It Funded?

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issues a funding competition every year for the **Continuum of Care (CoC) Program**—the largest federal program to address homelessness, currently funded at approximately \$3.6 billion.

State, regional, or local CoCs are planning and organizing bodies that coordinate a community-wide response to homelessness. Each CoC is responsible for leading a robust planning process associated with the annual funding competition. The purpose of this planning process is to make decisions for which individual projects to submit for consideration based on the CoC's needs and priorities.

Across the country, there are 380 CoCs covering all geographic areas within the United States. They comprise more than 7,000 projects funded under the CoC Program to provide an array of housing and services for people experiencing homelessness.

In many communities, particularly in rural and southern areas of the country, the CoC Program is the only source of funding for addressing homelessness, particularly permanent housing resources.

- See: [*Visualizing the Impacts of the President's FY2026 Budget: Returns to Homelessness and Major Setbacks Could Be Ahead.*](#)

Last year, Congressional appropriators authorized a **two-year award process**, and HUD proceeded with a two-year Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) in 2024 that was to apply to FY2024 and FY2025 funds. Despite CoCs undergoing a two-year planning process in response to that NOFO, HUD announced its **intention to run a new competition** for FY2025 funds in July.

The McKinney-Vento Act establishes the priorities and requirements for the CoC Program, which are primarily to promote a community wide response to homelessness. The statute prioritizes renewal funding for existing projects deemed important by the CoC and places high emphasis on permanent housing projects. And although the CoC Program is funded through a grant competition, typically 90 percent or more of the funding is not subject to the scoring element of the competition process to protect renewal projects ranked by CoCs through the competition process. Further, 87 percent of the current CoC Program funding nationally is allocated to permanent housing projects¹.

¹ HUD funds two primary categories of permanent housing: Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Rapid Re-Housing (RRH). PSH provides non-time limited rental assistance and wrap around services to people experiencing homelessness with disabilities and complex needs. RRH provides rental assistance and case management services for up to 24 months for people experiencing homelessness.

The CoC Program ensures **efficient use of taxpayer dollars** by leveraging private capital and other public resources to deliver measurable outcomes. Further, through the annual competition, CoCs ensure both accountability and transparency by reporting to HUD on project performance and overall effectiveness.

Although the amount of funds available for the CoC Program consistently increase year over year, **the need for these resources far outpaces what is available**. These increases are primarily to cover the costs associated with increases in rents and operating costs for renewal projects; they do not create increased capacity within CoCs.

Changes for FY2025 CoC Program Funding and Why They Matter

HUD announced in July that it would release a **new CoC NOFO** for FY2025 funds. After months of anticipation and growing concern, HUD [published](#) the NOFO on Thursday, November 14, 2025 with a due date of January 14, 2026.

Timing Concerns: This NOFO is extraordinarily late. Typically, HUD issues the annual NOFO in mid-summer. Over the last decade, it was issued in August twice; in both years, awards were delayed until March. HUD's anticipated award announcement date is May 1, 2026, but based on history, it is far more likely that awards will not be announced until June or later. This is problematic because existing grants will begin expiring in January with more than one-third of all CoC funded projects running out of current funding by June. Read more about why the timing is a concern here: [How HUD's Delays Will Impact Local and State Governments](#).

In addition to the problematic timing, the FY2025 CoC Program NOFO also includes major changes that will have catastrophic impacts on homelessness assistance around the country. Find the Alliance's full analysis and other resources [here](#). The most significant concerns include:

- 1. Only 30 percent of a CoC's funding is protected in Tier 1, down from 90 percent in past years.** This is the most significant structural change in a decade. With 70 percent of funding now fully competitive and tied to Merit Review scores and project ranking, even small scoring differences could lead to major funding losses.
- 2. Permanent Housing (PSH, RRH, Joint TH-RRH) is capped at 30 percent of Annual Renewal Demand.** CoCs must shift funding from existing permanent housing projects that exceed this cap toward new projects that are aligned with the administration's priorities, particularly transitional housing with high service requirements. New Joint TH-RRH projects are no longer eligible.

3. All projects except for CoC Planning/Unified Funding Agencies must compete, including Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project renewals and Domestic Violence Bonus. All project types must be ranked and scored in Tier 2 with no special protections, increasing competition across the entire portfolio, placing significant funding at risk.

4. New prohibitions can disqualify any project. HUD may reject projects in Tier 1 or 2 for engaging in racial preferences, using a definition of sex “other than binary,” or conducting activities viewed as “harm reduction.” These provisions create significant new compliance risks.

5. HUD’s new national priority centers on treatment, recovery, and required services. HUD favors projects with onsite substance use treatment, required service participation, sufficient treatment bed capacity, and 24/7 detox or inpatient access. Required services now boost scoring.

6. HUD elevates “public safety” as a major scoring factor. CoCs must show laws prohibiting camping and illicit drug use, enforcement protocols, cooperation with law enforcement, use of involuntary commitment standards, and SORNA implementation. These factors elevate the influence of local criminalization policies.

7. New project requirements reshape TH, RRH, PSH, and Street Outreach. New transitional housing must provide 40 hours/week of services; new RRH must show strong employment outcomes and require services; new PSH must serve elderly or physically disabled individuals (not including substance use disorder) with required services; and new street outreach must demonstrate strong law-enforcement partnerships.

8. Merit Review replaces prior CoC scoring and shifts weighting. The 130-point system includes 9 points for Project Capacity/Ranking, 40 for System Performance, and 81 for Coordination & Engagement, plus 19 bonus points. Service requirements feature prominently throughout.

9. Tier 2 scoring now favors projects with required services. Tier 2 projects receive up to 100 points based on Merit Review scores, local ranking, and up to 10 points for requiring services—giving mandatory-service models a clear advantage.

10. HUD’s expanded Risk Review increases the likelihood of project rejection. HUD may consider media reports, Inspector General and Government Accountability Office findings, public complaints, or an organization’s “history of subsidizing activities that conflict with the NOFO” as grounds for denying funding

What's the Projected Impact?

- **Create Housing Loss for at Least 170,000 People:** The elimination of the majority of permanent housing projects will result in the loss of housing assistance and supportive services for more than 170,000 people, many with disabilities and complex health needs.
- **Spur Increase in Unsheltered Homelessness:** Delays and gaps in funding will result in reduced access to permanent housing and services.
- **Add Delays and Gaps in Funding:** The timing and changes in priorities will cause delays and uncertainty, resulting in unpaid rent to landlords, missed payroll for staff, and significant decreases in services for people who rely on them for their health and safety.
- **Create Development Delays and Investment Concerns:** Ambiguity may stall development and deter investors in vitally needed housing projects.
- **Sowing Distrust with Partners:** Loss of assistance will deter landlords, local housing authorities, and private sector partners from partnering with CoC-funded organizations.
- **Shift Costs to Local and State Governments:** Mayors, county officials, governors, and other elected officials will be forced to cover the gaps and loss of housing assistance or face significant increases in homelessness, particularly unsheltered homelessness.
- **Set Back Decades of Progress:** Anticipated changes will abandon decades of evidence and bipartisanship, which found that permanent housing with the right support is the most cost-effective approach to ending long-term homelessness.

Additional Considerations

Undermines Private Sector Investment

- Pulling federal support from permanent housing development disrupts public-private partnerships and **discourages developers from pursuing affordable housing projects** that depend on predictable federal backing.
- This uncertainty can stall new construction, jeopardize existing projects, and in some cases lead to foreclosures—reducing property values and destabilizing neighborhoods.
- Landlords and property owners will be less likely to partner with CoC-funded organizations to rent housing units to program participants, making it **even more difficult for people to exit homelessness**.

Creates Cost Inefficiencies

- Without stable housing, more individuals cycle through emergency shelters and hospitals, and have negative interactions with law enforcement.
- This cycle increases reliance on costly public systems and creates unfunded mandates for counties and cities. Communities often spend **upwards of \$15,000 per person annually** on police, courts, EMS, 911, jails, prisons, and shelters when permanent housing is not available.
- Incarceration costs alone are **\$160 per day**, compared to **\$68 per day** for housing with services. Yet people are frequently discharged from jail directly into homelessness, restarting the cycle of arrest and incarceration.
- This cycle places a growing burden on taxpayers and strains local public safety systems. Investing in stable housing with services is a **more cost-effective strategy** that promotes

personal responsibility, reduces government spending, and helps individuals regain independence.

Threatens Economic Growth

- HUD's July communication to CoCs signals a shift toward increasing earned income among program participants, potentially at the expense of housing stability.
 - Changes to the CoC priorities risk destabilizing tenants and weakening their connection to housing, which **undermines their ability to pursue and maintain employment**.
 - Housing instability **reduces workforce participation** and productivity.

Erodes Congressional Authority

- Communications from the Administration, including the President's FY2026 Budget Request, Executive Orders, and the CoC Builds NOFO, suggest a shift in funding priorities that will diverge from statute and Congressional direction.
- This raises concerns about the executive branch redefining homelessness policy **without legislative input**.
- Both the House and Senate reaffirmed their commitment to long-standing, bipartisan programs in their FY2026 HUD appropriations bills, underscoring Congress's constitutional role in setting policy.

What We're Asking Congress to Do

The radical changes included in the FY2025 CoC Program NOFO are being driven by the administration and HUD—**not** Congress. However, because these changes shift funding priorities that would typically **require Congressional oversight**, it's important to alert Members of Congress and encourage them to take action. They can influence the administration to revise or withdraw the proposal, or they can introduce legislative language to block it from moving forward.

Early and frequent engagement is essential to raise awareness, lay the groundwork for a strong response, and determine if it's possible to stop dangerous proposals from moving forward.

Actions Members of Congress Can Take

- **Engage the White House**
Urge Members of Congress to directly communicate with the White House and HUD to maintain the two-year CoC funding cycle as approved by Congress in 2024. Additionally, Members of Congress should remind the Administration that changes to program priorities normally requiring legislative approval should be routed through the appropriate authorizing committees.
- **Advance Protective Language**
Urge Members of Congress to support the inclusion of language in an upcoming appropriations bill that would ensure the renewal of existing programs for 12 months, essentially preserving the two-year funding cycle for the CoC Program from last year.

Current Congressional Strategy

Congressional allies are looking for opportunities to include protective language in an upcoming appropriations bill. The ideal language was previously included in earlier legislation, H.R. 5450 / S. 2882:

“Not later than December 15, 2025, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (“the Secretary”) shall noncompetitively renew all existing continuum of care grants and youth homelessness demonstration projects expiring during calendar year 2026 for one 12-month period, notwithstanding any inconsistent provisions in subtitle C of title IV of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended: *Provided*, That the Secretary shall make reasonable adjustments for cost-of-living adjustments for supportive services and use fiscal year 2025 fair market rents for determining eligible renewal amounts.”

This is a **no-cost provision** and is consistent with Congress’ past authorization of a two-year NOFO.

Grassroots Advocacy and Activation Strategies

Advocates from across the country have already generated bipartisan support from Representatives and Senators for renewing CoC grants expiring in 2026, including a [sign-on letter led by House Republicans](#) and a [sign-on letter led by Senate Democrats](#). Although Congress did not secure this protective language in the recent Continuing Resolution bill, now that the NOFO is out and the worst of our concerns have been affirmed, we must leverage this information to ensure that both Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate are concerned enough to include it in an upcoming appropriations bill.

Congressional Outreach Priorities

Target your outreach to your two Senators from your state, the Representative for your home district, and (if applicable), the Representative(s) that represent your organization’s service area, if different than the Representative for your home district.

While **all Members of Congress should be engaged** in advocacy efforts related to the CoC NOFO, certain members and committees are **more directly involved in shaping housing policy and funding decisions**. Outreach to any member is valuable, but if your organization or community is represented by a member of one of these key committees, it may be especially strategic to prioritize those connections. If none of your members serve on key committees or hold leadership roles, urge them to use their influence with those key members on this critical matter.

House and Senate Leaders

House Republican Leaders

[Mike Johnson](#) (Speaker of the House)

[Steve Scalise](#) (House Majority Leader)

[Tom Emmer](#) (House Majority Whip)
[Lisa McClain](#) (House Conference Chairwoman)
[Kevin Hern](#) (Republican Policy Committee Chairman)

House Democratic Leaders

[Hakeem Jeffries](#) (House Democratic Leader)
[Katherine Clark](#) (House Democratic Whip)
[Pete Aguilar](#) (House Democratic Caucus Chairman)
[Joe Neguse](#) (House Democratic Assistant Leader)
[Ted Lieu](#) (House Democratic Caucus Vice Chairman)

Senate Republican Leaders

[John Thune](#) (Senate Majority Leader)
[John Barrasso](#) (Majority Whip)

Senate Democratic Leaders

[Charles Schumer](#) (Senate Democratic Leader)
[Richard Durbin](#) (Senate Democratic Whip)

Key Committees

- [House Transportation-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee](#) (responsible for determining HUD funding levels)
- [Senate Transportation-HUD Appropriations Subcommittee](#) (responsible for determining HUD funding levels)
- [House Appropriations Committee](#) (responsible for determining funding levels for federal agencies)
- [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) (responsible for determining funding levels for federal agencies)
- [House Financial Services Committee](#) (responsible for determining HUD's programs and rules)
- [Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee](#) (responsible for determining HUD's programs and rules)

Special Considerations for Talking to Republican Lawmakers

1. Keep the focus local instead of global.

Talk about the NOFO's impact on homeless services in the lawmaker's district or state:

- identify when specific CoC grants will expire in which locations in the first several months of 2026, and how specific homeless services will deal with months-long funding interruptions;
- indicate how a significant and wrenching shift away from permanent housing will impact the jurisdiction; and

- point out other sectors in the community which are concerned about the NOFO, including businesses, landlords, hospitals, and houses of worship.

2. Thank them for their support earlier this year for sensible homelessness policies.

If they are House or Senate Republicans: “Thanks for saying no to the Administration’s ‘Skinny Budget’ proposal to eliminate the CoC program and its use of permanent supportive housing. Did you know HUD’s changes to this NOFO will have the same result?”

If they are Senate Republicans: “Thanks for supporting the ROAD to Housing Act (S. 2651) as an amendment to the big defense bill. The ROAD to Housing Act can be cited as an example to House and Senate Republicans alike of bipartisan leadership on affordable housing and homelessness policy, one which can be followed in other instances. Clearly, there’s safe middle ground on homelessness and housing for Congressional Republicans.”

3. Keep expectations reasonable.

In the current climate, we should not expect Republicans to openly defy the Administration, repudiate Secretary Turner, or publicly champion Permanent Supportive Housing and Housing First. The House Republican sign-on letter was an anomaly. But even if your Republican members in the House or Senate are uncomfortable with taking a public stance, it is important that they understand our arguments and advocate for our positions quietly with their leadership.

4. Use more subdued rhetoric.

We should be careful how we characterize the Administration’s approach. Instead of criticizing the Administration, HUD, or Secretary Turner when we meet with Congressional Republicans, we should instead decry the reported contents of “the NOFO;” emphasize the lack of time left to conduct a NOFO without experiencing “inevitable” funding interruptions next year; and suggest the government shutdown be used as an excuse to wait until next year when HUD can make a fresh start now. Finally, we should talk up the value of Congressional review of significant regulatory changes to homelessness programs before they are actually implemented.

Tailoring Your Approach to Your Targets

An advocacy approach that works with one Member of Congress will not always work with another. Advocacy styles need to be adapted to what will be most compelling to individual lawmakers and how they lean on the political spectrum of progressive, moderate, and conservative.

The framework below is intended as a **starting point**, not a rigid formula. Advocacy is dynamic: messaging often crosses styles depending on the issue, audience, and moment. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and the most effective advocacy efforts often blend elements from multiple styles.

Advocacy Style	Advocacy Messaging (What to Say)	Possible Messengers (Who Should Say It)	Congressional Alignment (Who Should Hear It)
Progressive or Left-Leaning	(1) Changes to the NOFO undermine human dignity (2) Will harm marginalized groups and trauma survivors (3) Will create service disruptions and increase homelessness (5) Jeopardizes health and housing outcomes for vulnerable populations	(1) Grassroots organizations (2) Social justice-focused groups (3) CoC leads (4) Housing & homeless coalitions (5) Philanthropic foundations (6) Progressive local/state lawmakers	(1) Progressive and mainstream Democrats (2) Members from urban districts (3) Members focused on poverty and racial equity (4) Members with districts/states with high rates of homelessness/Medicaid use
Moderate	(1) Changes to the CoC will undermine proven strategies that prioritize housing stability and health (2) Jeopardizes public-private partnerships that drive housing development (3) Undermines long-term planning by introducing uncertainty into funding streams (4) Risks destabilizing health and housing systems that communities have invested in for years	(1) Chambers of commerce (2) Hospitals (3) Housing Finance Agencies (4) Public Housing Authorities (4) Cross-sector partners (5) CoC leads (6) Housing developers (7) Behavioral health providers (8) Housing & homeless coalitions (9) Local/state lawmakers	(1) Centrists/known to co-sponsor bi-partisan legislation (2) Members in close districts/at risk of losing their seat (3) Members with districts/states with high rates of homelessness/Medicaid use
Right-Leaning or Conservative	(1) Change to the NOFO will undermine private sector investments and property values when building projects stall (2) Creates uncertainty for developers and landlord/property managers (3) Defunding stable housing options will increase costs to the government in other areas like shelters, police, etc. (4) Changes to the statute represents administration overreach and erodes Congressional authority	(1) Sheriffs' associations (2) Faith-based groups (3) Local/state officials (4) Housing Finance Agencies (5) Banks and financial institutions (6) Business leaders (7) Economists (9) Conservative local/state lawmakers	(1) Conservative Republicans (2) Law enforcement caucuses (3) Members from rural districts (4) Fiscal conservatives (5) Constitutionalists (emphasized checks and balances)

Working Together for Greater Impact

Every single one of us has a role to play in advocacy, but those roles can vary in terms of level of engagement and influence.

Types of advocacy engagement:

LEAD: You are well-positioned to drive education and/or advocacy efforts directly.

Examples of Strategies:

- Convene stakeholder roundtables or virtual briefings
- Coordinate joint letters or sign-on campaigns to Congress
- Organize district visits or calls with Congressional staff
- Submit op-eds or media pieces highlighting local impact
- Share talking points and policy briefs with partners

SUPPORT: You have a strong presence, but another group is leading advocacy.

Examples of Strategies:

- Share resources and materials
- Co-host events with other stakeholders
- Provide background support for meetings or briefings
- Amplify lead group's efforts and bring in stakeholders not currently at the table

INFORM: You have limited reach but are connected to at least one other stakeholder.

Examples of Strategies:

- Email resources and materials to known stakeholders
- Encourage them to contact their congressional representatives
- Offer to join calls or provide background support
- Share updates and resources to help them stay informed

There are many strategies that can be deployed in your advocacy. Some stakeholders may lean into progressive tactics (like protests or public demonstrations), while others may prefer conservative approaches (such as engaging business leaders or emphasizing fiscal impacts). Some partners may be able to lobby, while others may only be able to educate due to legal or organizational constraints. Advocates should work together to deploy a wide range of tactics that complement each other. For example, if one partner is organizing a protest, another might engage Congressional offices using bipartisan messaging or policy briefs. This allows multiple advocates to work on shared goals while reaching different audiences and decision-makers.

Considerations on Lobbying

Nonprofit organizations must comply with IRS regulations when engaging in lobbying; however, there is no limit on how much non-lobbying educational advocacy a nonprofit organization can do. Therefore, it's important to distinguish between **educational advocacy** and **lobbying efforts**, as each has different reporting and compliance requirements.

Educational Advocacy (Non-Lobbying):

These activities are aimed at educating stakeholders—such as partners, community members, or the public—about an issue without urging them to take a specific position on legislation. Examples include sharing data, explaining policy impacts, or hosting informational sessions.

Grassroots Lobbying:

This involves mobilizing the public to contact legislators or government officials regarding their support for or opposition to specific legislation. Organizing coalitions or campaigns that ask people to take action on a legislative issue falls under this category.

Direct Lobbying:

This refers to direct communication with legislators or their staff to influence specific legislation. Such activities include meetings, calls, or written communications that express a view on a legislative proposal.

To maintain compliance, nonprofits should accurately track time and activities related to each type of engagement.

- Learn more about the limitations and ways to track these activities here: [Using Advocacy to End Homelessness: A Toolkit for Understanding and Conducting Advocacy](#).

If there are questions about how to categorize an activity, staff should consult with their legal or compliance team.

Engaging Other Messengers

The CoC Program is **the heart of addressing homelessness in our country**. It was designed in a bipartisan effort to provide tangible support that meets the real challenges of homelessness faced by individuals, service providers, states, local government, faith groups, and businesses, amongst others.

Homelessness does not only impact the individuals who are homeless, or the service providers that assist them—it has a far-reaching ripple effect on communities and the larger socio-economic fabric. Effective advocacy must involve a broad base of stakeholders to carry the message and acknowledge that *certain messengers* can be more effective than others. To engage and activate, it is important that advocates meet each audience where they are by speaking in values, priorities, and language that resonate locally. While the core message (“prevent HUD from dismantling the CoC Program with the CoC NOFO”) remains constant, the framing and evidence used will shift depending on who you’re speaking to.

Here are some messengers, tips on how to engage them, and sample messages when reaching out:

Service Providers

Messaging Goal: Service providers like shelters, medical and mental health providers are the backbone of the homelessness response system. They deliver programs that federal government funds, and the CoC program is an integral part of the government's response to homelessness. Connect how the proposed CoC program changes will directly impact the frontline and client outcomes.

Frame: Expertise, effectiveness of the program, and evidence.

Approach:

- Highlight how renewal cuts would disrupt existing programs that already work in the community or district.
- Use data and local human stories to make the case that permanent housing saves lives and money.
- Emphasize that providers aren't asking for new funding — they're trying to protect stability for the people they serve.

Message Example: "The CoC programs helped over 600 people exit homelessness last year. Cuts to renewal funding would reverse years of progress, force many housed individuals back into homelessness, and destabilize entire communities."

Local Leaders (Mayors, County Executives, City Councils)

Messaging Goal: Emphasize stability, fiscal responsibility, and community well-being.

Frame: Cost-effectiveness, public safety, strain on local budget, and local control.

Approach:

- Show that local investments depend on federal continuity, and losing HUD funds means local taxpayers will pay more.
- Connect housing stability to local economic development, employment, community cohesion, and neighborhood safety.
- Encourage them to publicly support or sign on to advocacy letters.

Message Example: "Every dollar in CoC funding leverages \$X in local investments. Without renewal, local taxpayers will shoulder the burden."

Elected Officials (Members of Congress, State Legislators)

Messaging Goal: Link homelessness solutions to constituent priorities, ripple effects on economy and community, and bipartisan outcomes.

Frame: Accountability, results, impact on businesses and return on investment.

Approach:

- Use district-level data: how many people are currently housed, local projects funded, economic multiplier effect.
- Avoid political framing and instead highlight shared goals like reducing encampments, improving public health, and cutting costs.
- Invite them to visit housing programs in their districts.

Message Example: "These programs get homeless veterans, families, and people with disabilities off the streets of your district. Protecting the CoC program means protecting results your constituents can see."

Faith Groups

Messaging Goal: Connect the issue to moral and community responsibility.

Frame: Compassion, stewardship, and service.

Approach:

- Emphasize shared values like caring for your neighbors, protecting the vulnerable, and supporting dignity.
- Encourage faith partners to share testimonials and mobilize their congregations.
- Provide “values-based” talking points rather than policy jargon.

Message Example: “Faith communities have always stepped up for those in need. Protecting housing programs is an act of moral duty that keeps families together and restores hope.”

Public Advocates (General Public, Donors, Volunteers, Concerned Citizens)

Messaging Goal: Inspire participation in advocacy and underscore the urgency of the moment.

Frame: Shared humanity, local impact, caring for neighbors, and collective power.

Approach:

- Tell the story of what’s at stake for people: the human cost, not just programs.
- Provide simple, specific actions like call your Member of Congress and state legislators, sign a petition, share a story.
- Reinforce that advocacy works — local voices influence national outcomes.

Message Example: “Your voice matters. If we act now, we can prevent 170,000 formerly homeless people from going back into encampments. Contact your Representative today.”

Building Coalitions Beyond the Homelessness Field

The threat to homelessness response systems extends beyond the homelessness sector and the current threat against the CoC Program. It will adversely affect public health, economic mobility, disability rights, and veterans’ wellbeing. Bringing those stakeholders into the camp and expanding coalitions furthers legitimacy, visibility, and political leverage.

Why It Matters

- Policymakers pay attention when multiple sectors speak with one voice.
- Partnering broadens the issue: housing stability is a health, economic, and justice issue.
- Allies bring new advocacy channels, advocates, relationships, and infrastructure that enhances reach and impact. For example, hospital associations, veteran service organizations, and disability networks have deep relationships with policymakers.
- Partnership in joint messaging can be effective and expansive in a shorter time.

For Healthcare Providers

Messaging Goal: Invite health providers to meet with legislators, co-sign letters, or share data on the cost of homelessness.

Message Example: “Permanent housing is preventive care - it reduces ER visits, hospital stays, and public costs.”

For Veterans’ Organizations

Messaging Goal: Leverage their relationship and credibility with bipartisan policymakers and highlight the success of veteran housing initiatives under the CoC Program.

Message Example: “Permanent housing initiatives in many cities are now at risk, especially initiatives that have contributed to significant progress on ending veteran homelessness .”

For Disability Rights and Behavioral Health Advocates

Messaging Goal: Connect loss of permanent housing funds to reduced access for people with disabilities or chronic conditions. Emphasize ADA principles and equal access to housing as a civil right.

Message Example: “Without this funding, we will push those with disabilities and need of wraparound services back into the streets.”

Affordable Housing Developers and Philanthropy

Messaging Goal: Stress how the uncertainty of CoC changes can jeopardize long-term investment.

Message Example: “Without predictable renewal funding, public-private housing partnerships cannot function.”

Law Enforcement

Messaging Goal: Emphasize housing as the foundation of public safety and how it would impact the role of law enforcement in communities.

Message Example: “Housing is a foundation of public safety. When our leaders support investments in housing, they are supporting law enforcement's directive to keep communities safe. When they don't, they force law enforcement to carry a greater burden in addressing homelessness without the resources or training to help.”

Justice Reform Groups

Message Goal: Keep the focus on building alliances around reducing criminalization.

Message Example: “Homelessness is an economic problem, not a criminal one. Criminalizing those which the system failed will be counterproductive to addressing homelessness.”

How to Operationalize a Coalition:

- Convene joint briefings or sign-on letters under a unified message like “Protect Housing Stability.”
- Host weekly/monthly regional coalition calls to share state and federal-level advocacy actions planned.
- Develop a “Coalition Toolkit” with sample language, co-branding, and partner outreach templates.

- Encourage shared storytelling to uplift how, for example, a hospital, veteran organization, and housing provider would be impacted through co-authoring press release or op-eds.

Grassroots Advocacy vs. Institutional Advocacy

Both grassroots and institutional advocacy are essential, but they play different roles in influencing decision-making. The most effective campaigns weave both approaches together.

Grassroots Advocacy

Who: Individuals with lived experience, community advocates, front-line providers, faith groups, businesses, and local coalitions.

Strengths: Directly impacted or close to impact, can speak authentically, highlight the urgency, actions will derive public visibility.

Primary Tools:

- Storytelling and public mobilization.
- Social media and community petitions.
- Town halls, op-eds, and press outreach.
- Meeting with Members of Congress and state legislators in their districts as constituents.

Best Use: Shaping public opinion, mobilizing local action, and personalizing the issue for decision-makers.

Example: Tenants and frontline service providers share stories with local media about how the CoC Program is effective and has changed their lives or the lives of their clients.

Institutional Advocacy

Who: Established organizations, coalitions, and nonprofits with policy expertise and access to decision-makers.

Strengths: Policy credibility, data and studies to support the program, sustained government relationships.

Primary Tools:

- Formal meetings and briefings with Members or Congressional staff in D.C.
- Comment letters, coalition sign-ons, and policy analysis.
- Funding advocacy and coordination across sectors.

Best Use: Influencing rulemaking, legislation, budget allocations, bring the grassroots voices to the fore.

Example: The Alliance and national partners submit detailed recommendations to the Transportation-Housing and Urban Development (T-HUD) Subcommittee on protecting the funding for the CoC Program.

How They Work Together

- Grassroots drives urgency; institutional advocacy shapes solutions.
- Grassroots voices add direct impact to institutional policy positions.
- Institutional actors provide the structure, research, and access to amplify grassroots demands.

Example: When local advocates share stories, national partners can include these stories in letters, media outreach, and policymaker briefings to highlight the impact.

How to Write an Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor

Op-Eds can be a very effective tactic for getting the attention of lawmakers, policymakers, potential coalition partners, and other people you wish to influence. However, placing an op-ed can be challenging without knowing the basic structure that opinion page editors seek. Use the following tips as you plan and write your op-ed.

1. **Length:** The biggest challenge for many authors is fitting their submission within a publication's guidelines. Word counts may vary among publications, but as a standard rule, shorter is better, with a 750-word limit being an appropriate target length.
 - **TIP:** It is very common to struggle to get your word count down. Be sure to consult the template outline below to help your organization. If you can't get it within 1,200 words, you will need to reassess your outline.
2. **Authorship:** Editorial page editors are often swayed to publish an op-ed based on who the author is. In many cases, you will be the most credible messenger, but in some cases, depending on who you are trying to reach, it might be someone else within your network. For example, consider other providers who might want to co-author with you. Perhaps your board members have local influence, or a large employer regularly volunteers with your organization and would be interested in participating. Do you have close relationships with politicians or government figures of any kind – from your Senator, to your PHA leader, your county commissioner, or an ally in city hall? Of course, never forget the power of an op-ed written through the lens of lived experience.
3. **Format:** Op-eds tend to follow a relatively set structure, which can sometimes be difficult to adopt. Follow this outline to confirm to it as best as you can:
 - a. **THE LEDE:**
 - i. This sets the stage and grabs your reader's attention. You always want to hook your lede into a timely news event that has stakes for the readership.
 - b. **THE ARGUMENT:**
 - i. What is your opinion or thesis about the problem or opportunity?
 - c. **YOUR FIRST POINT TO SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENT**
 - i. Your evidence to support that point. Evidence is essential. Each point must be based on evidence, such as stats, news reports, research reports, government data, firsthand experience, or historical precedents, for example. You may have more than one piece of evidence to support your point. For every statistic you use, make sure that you link to a credible source for it.
 - ii. Your conclusion based on that evidence.
 - d. **YOUR SECOND POINT TO SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENT**
 - i. Same structure as above

- e. YOUR THIRD POINT TO SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENT
 - i. Same structure as above
 - f. THE “TO BE SURE” PARAGRAPH.
 - i. This is where you pre-emptively acknowledge the opposition’s counterarguments and use evidence to invalidate them. Editors value this approach, as it demonstrates an awareness that the issue is contested (making it newsworthy). The trick here is to broadly address the counterargument and defeat it as quickly as possible, so that you aren’t giving it more time than it deserves; spending entire paragraphs on the opposition’s perspective will backfire.
 - g. CONCLUSION:
 - i. Reinforce your argument with a call to action for the people your op-ed is targeted to.
4. **Targeting:** Be realistic about your expectations for placement. While an op-ed in the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* continue to be the ideal targets for broad visibility, the competition and barriers to placement are overwhelming. Consider the local daily newspaper in your community, as well as the web sites for local broadcast channels, and local non-profit news sites. Even if it is placed in a smaller circulation outlet, you can boost an op-ed’s visibility through aggressive promotion on social media, in your newsletter, and on your web site.
5. **Pitching:** In most news outlets, the newsroom and the editorial page operate separately, meaning that even if you have a strong contact with a journalist, you will have to pitch your op-ed through the editorial desk. The ideal situation is to have a contact on this desk that you can email directly, but most outlets require submission via an online form or a general email address. Please note the following SOPs:
- a. Outlets will demand exclusivity, meaning that you should not publish the op-ed anywhere (even your blog), or pitch it to other papers while it is being pitched to that outlet.
 - b. Outlets receive a high volume of op-ed submissions, and they may require up to 10 days to consider it. This timing is prohibitive for breaking news stories, so if you have a direct contact on the editorial page, do not hesitate to follow up with them after two days. This can enable you to move on to the next outlet on your list if the editor says no.
 - c. It is essential that you are on standby to approve any edits or answer any questions from the editor. If an editor is asking, it means that they are strongly considering publication. If you delay a response, it could result in their moving on to the next submission from someone else.

Amplifying Stories Through Media

Strategic engagement with local and regional media amplifies awareness and influences both public opinion and Congressional attention to the CoC NOFO issue. Effective local media

coverage reaches Members of Congress in their home districts, influences public opinion, and elevates the voices of those directly affected by supportive housing programs.

The objective of this effort is education and visibility by helping readers and viewers understand how proposed changes would affect their communities, partners, and neighbors.

This section provides guidance on engaging local and regional media to amplify the impact of proposed CoC funding changes.

Strategic Messaging Framework for Media

Key Strategy: Lead with local impact and human stories, not national policy debates.

- **Avoid:** “HUD’s proposed changes to the CoC NOFO...” **Instead:** “XXX local residents could lose their homes under the proposed funding changes...”
- **Keep it Local and Human:** Focus on community impact and outcomes—how the projects funded through the CoC Program change lives and strengthen neighborhoods.
- **Stay Neutral:** Emphasize data, collaboration, and bipartisan success rather than political critique.
- **Lift Many Voices:** Show that solutions come from partnerships among nonprofits, landlords, business leaders, healthcare systems, and local officials.
- **Pair Stories with Data:** Combine personal stories with local statistics for credibility. Include information like:
 - Number of units at risk in your community
 - Annual economic impact (cost savings from reduced ER visits, jail stays)
 - Specific developments or projects that could be canceled
- **Balance Urgency with Solutions:** It’s not enough to tell your elected officials to take action ASAP; they must hear from you what the best solution is. When advocating with urgency:
 - Acknowledge the problem clearly
 - Highlight what Congress can do
 - Include voices of those taking action (local officials, providers, residents)
- **Stay in Compliance:** Keep messaging educational. Avoid direct calls for legislative action unless your organization can legally lobby. Learn more [here](#).

Recommended Media Targets

- Tier 1: Local Daily Newspapers & Regional News Sites
- Tier 2: Business, Trade & Economic Outlets
- Tier 3: TV & Radio (Local Broadcast & NPR Affiliates)
- Tier 4: Community & Specialty Media
- Tier 5: Hyperlocal Digital & Newsletter Media

Sample Pitch Angles

When you are pitching to media, it’s best to go in with a specific angle. Below are sample messages that you can adapt to your community’s needs and media landscape.

- **Stable Homes, Strong Communities:**
“In our community, hundreds of residents with disabilities are thriving in supportive housing. With proposed federal changes, their stability—and the success of local landlords and service providers—hangs in the balance.”
- **Supportive Housing is Cost Effective:**
“Hospitals and law enforcement agree: stable housing reduces costly emergencies. We can’t afford to lose what works.”
- **Partnerships That Work:**
“Public-private partnerships are at risk if HUD’s proposed housing cap moves forward. Our community has seen firsthand how federal stability supports local investment.”
- **From Homelessness to a Stable Home:**
“After years without a home, [Name] now has housing and the support needed to stay there. Stories like this show why supportive housing works.”
- **Local Leaders Sound the Alarm:**
“Business, faith, and civic leaders across [city/county/region] are urging HUD to maintain stable housing funding that keeps our communities strong.”

Voices to Elevate

- Tenants and families – focus on health, independence, and stability
- Landlords and developers – highlight reliability and property value stability
- Service providers and CoC leads – emphasize proven outcomes and partnerships
- Healthcare and behavioral health leaders – show cost savings and improved outcomes
- Law enforcement and local officials – underscore reduced crisis calls and safer communities
- Business and civic leaders – reinforce economic and workforce stability

Action Alert Template for Partner Networks

The best way to center local voices and highlight community-specific impacts is by having a local partner or coalition generate an action alert. However, if that’s not possible, you can also share the National Alliance to End Homelessness’ action alerts to mobilize your networks.

Here is a sample action alert email template.

ACTION ALERT: HUD Proposal Threatens Critical Homelessness Funding

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is instituting a cap in the FY2025 CoC Program NOFO that will limit permanent housing to just 30% of program funding—down from the current 87%. This change alone will put 170,000+ formerly homeless people who are now stably housed nationwide at risk of losing their housing.

Permanent housing paired with supportive services works. It keeps people housed, reduces ER visits and jail stays, and saves public dollars. This proposal would reverse decades of progress and increase homelessness across the country.

 **We need your voice. Take action now:**

 **Urge Congress to engage the White House and HUD** to maintain the two-year Continuum of Care funding cycle and ensure any major program changes go through the proper legislative channels.

 **Ask Congress to include protective language** in a Continuing Resolution (CR) or other legislative vehicle to preserve the two-year funding cycle and safeguard supportive housing programs.

 [Insert link to action alert or sign-on letter]

 ****[Insert Local Impact Here]****

(e.g., “In [Your City/State], this could mean losing [X] units of supportive housing and displacing [Y] people.”)

 **[Insert Sector-Specific Framing]**

(e.g., “As a healthcare provider, we know housing is healthcare. This proposal would increase ER visits and worsen health outcomes.”)

Sample Letters for Outreach

Requesting Meetings with Congressional Offices

Note: Prior to making request, determine if you are required to use a portal on the member’s website or if you need to email a scheduler in the member’s office. If requesting via email, cc any staff contacts that you know and the Alliance’s John Threlkeld at jthrelkeld@naeh.org.

Subject: Request for Meeting to Discuss HUD’s Proposed CoC Changes in [State/District]

Dear Scheduler,

I am writing on behalf of [Organization Name], a [brief description of your organization] serving [geographic area or population]. We urgently request a meeting to discuss the changes to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Continuum of Care (CoC) homeless services grant program and the potential adverse consequences for our community and state.

Rather than renewing homeless services grants as Congress intended, HUD insists on starting the latest CoC grants competition ever, one which will [inevitably lead to funding interruptions next year](#). That could mean no funding for total assistance, no funding for supportive housing services, no funding for case management—perhaps for months. HUD is also introducing [major changes](#) to

priorities and the funding process that could have catastrophic impacts on our community especially because there is not adequate time to prepare. This includes a cap on permanent housing funding at 30% of CoC funding, a significant and detrimental reduction from the current 87%. Both changes would cause significant increases in homelessness.

We will meet with you in person back home (or virtually, if you are in Washington, D.C.). And if you are busy, we will meet with your staff, virtually in D.C., or personally back home.

Please let us know when and where. We look forward to our meeting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Organization]

[Contact information]

Additional Sample Letters

- [**Sample Organizational Sign On Letter to Members of Congress**](#): Organizations that want to join together on a sign-on letter can use this as an example.
- [**Customizable Elected Official Letter**](#): Advocates can use this customizable template to plug in local and/or state data to provide their elected officials with a letter they can use in their outreach to Congress. It will open as a downloadable word file.