

July 6, 2016

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Chairman
THUD Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
THUD Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Price
Ranking Member
THUD Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
THUD Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

The undersigned national and local organizations working to end to homelessness in the United States thank you for providing increased funding to serve people experiencing homelessness in your FY 2017 T-HUD spending bills. We urge you to include at least the House level of funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program in your final bill. **The \$2.487 billion included in the House bill for Homeless Assistance would allow communities across the country to make significant strides in ending homelessness.**

Experience has shown that when Congress invests money in homeless assistance, good results follow. This is particularly true now. At Congress's direction, HUD has made this program more competitive, incentivizing strategies that lead to the best possible results. Homeless system leaders and providers have worked hard to improve what they do, in the face of rapidly escalating rents and stubbornly high rates of poverty. They do this work for the sake of people who are homeless and for whom a chance to sleep in a modest apartment or house is the platform that can return them to a decent quality of life. The increase included in the House bill would provide this opportunity for thousands more Americans.

We also encourage you to **extend the sunset date of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) from 2017 to 2020, while maintaining its current funding level of \$3.6 million.** USICH's work to cut through bureaucracy and competing priorities to create federal and local partnerships has helped facilitate the most strategic use of Congressional investments in homeless assistance programs, driving national decreases in homelessness.

At the federal level, USICH's small staff of experts articulates a clear vision of how homelessness can be ended, and helps 19 federal agencies align their programs with that vision. This involves educating agencies about the best package of housing and supportive services for each population; encouraging them to partner to provide this in an effective, streamlined way that leverages resources; and pushing them to hold each other accountable for making progress. USICH played a key role, for example, in working with HUD and VA to drive the significant reductions in veteran homelessness that have been achieved. Another example is USICH's work to combine HUD-funded housing with Medicaid-funded services in permanent supportive housing, accelerating progress on ending chronic homelessness.

At the local level, USICH's Regional Coordinators help stakeholders use federal resources from different agencies in order to efficiently implement best practice strategies that meet locally determined needs. USICH also works to ensure that information about federal programs is clear and easily accessible.

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Despite progress, there is much work to be done to end homelessness for the more than half a million Americans who still find themselves in this situation each night, including families with children, people with disabilities, veterans, unaccompanied youth, and many others. This coalition of national and local organizations has seen firsthand that adequate funding from Congress, and cross-agency coordination facilitated by USICH can end homelessness, for individuals, families and communities. **We urge you to fund Homeless Assistance Grants at least at \$2.487 billion, the level in the House bill; and to maintain funding for USICH at \$3.6 million and extend its sunset date from 2017 to 2020, the deadline to end family and youth homelessness.** Thank you again for your leadership on ending homelessness in America and your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

National Organizations:

The National Alliance to End Homelessness

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State and Local Organizations:

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CC:

The Hon. Hal Rogers

The Hon. Barbara Mikulski

The Hon. Thad Cochran

The Hon. Nita Lowey