

September 20, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair  
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing, Development and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

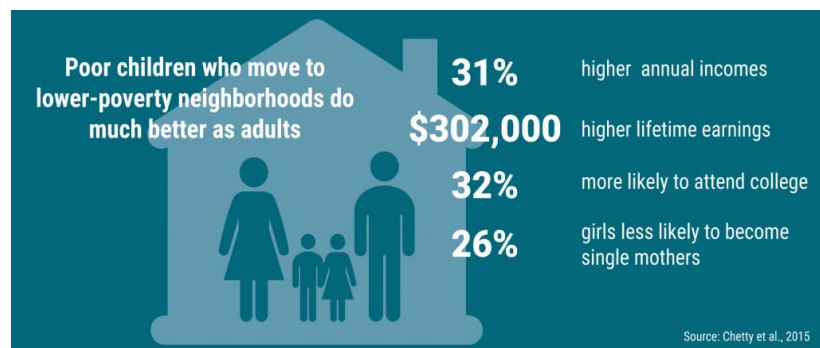
The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing, Development and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairs, Vice Chair, and Ranking Member:

We are the Steering Committee of *Opportunity Starts at Home*, a national, multi-sector campaign that is building a broad movement in support of federal policies that meet the housing needs of the most vulnerable low-income people. We come from a wide range of sectors, each with our own perspectives and concerns. Yet we all believe that our own goals are inextricably linked to whether people have access to safe, decent, affordable homes in neighborhoods of opportunity.

**We urge Congress to include in its final Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) FY 2019 appropriations bill the House provision that invests \$50 million for the Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration.**

The Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration would provide low-income households with expanded access to neighborhoods of opportunity with strong schools, better job prospects, and other resources. Research shows that when children in poor families grow up in neighborhoods with low poverty, quality schools, and low crime, they are significantly more likely to attend college, less likely to become single parents, and more likely to earn dramatically more as adults over the course of their lifetimes. This helps break cycles of generational poverty and produces a positive taxpayer return. Research also shows that low-income students perform better academically and close achievement gaps faster when housing assistance enables them to live stably in opportunity neighborhoods with lower-poverty schools.



The demonstration recently received strong bipartisan support in the House of Representatives (368-19) because it embodies research-based best practices that have a proven return on investment and a track record of lifting young children out of poverty. The demonstration was also funded in last Congress' Senate THUD bill but was not ultimately enacted.



The demonstration would empower participating housing agencies to: 1) inform families with children about the benefits of opportunity neighborhoods; 2) help interested families identify housing possibilities in those neighborhoods; 3) recruit landlords that wish to participate in the program; and 4) support families during and after the move. To enable this demonstration and to incentivize housing agencies to join, roughly 2,000 new vouchers would be made available. The demonstration will be thoroughly evaluated for effectiveness.

**We urge you to fund the Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration in the final THUD bill.**

The evidence is clear: this demonstration will dramatically improve the life trajectories of young children across the nation. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

Catholic Charities USA  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's HealthWatch  
Community Catalyst  
Food Research & Action Center  
Make Room  
NAACP

National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
National Education Association  
National League of Cities  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
UnidosUS

CC: The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations  
The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Chair, House Appropriations THUD Subcommittee  
The Honorable David Price, Ranking Member, House Appropriations THUD Subcommittee