

March 11, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
2004 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Neal
2309 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maxine Waters
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin Brady
1011 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Chairwoman Waters, Ranking Member McHenry, Chairman Neal, and Ranking Member Brady:

Policymakers from both sides of the aisle agree that a significant investment in infrastructure should be a top priority. To maximize impact, a broad infrastructure package should contain resources to construct and preserve affordable housing for people with the lowest incomes.

Within the affordable housing component of the broader infrastructure package, the following would help address some of the nation's highest priority housing needs and could be readily put to use by state and local agencies: at least \$5 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF); at least \$15 billion for public housing capital funding; and the inclusion of a targeted renters' tax credit.

Like roads and bridges, affordable housing is a long-term asset that helps communities and families thrive. Investing in affordable housing infrastructure, through new construction and preservation, will:

- **Help people afford housing.** Today, 11 million households (most with incomes below the poverty line) pay over half their income for housing, forcing them to divert resources from other basic needs, such as healthcare and nutritious food, and placing them at risk of housing instability and homelessness — problems linked to serious adverse effects on children's health and development.
- **Address substandard conditions.** Renovations could fix conditions like faulty elevators, broken heating systems, and lead-paint hazards that can jeopardize residents' safety and have devastating long-run effects on children.
- **Reduce other public costs.** Affordable housing can reduce costs in other areas. For example: lowering healthcare costs by enabling seniors and people with disabilities to live independently rather than in institutions. Renovating public housing is an especially wise investment, since it can reduce future public costs for repairs (e.g., by patching a leaky roof before damage spreads).
- **Create job opportunities.** Like other infrastructure investments, affordable housing funding creates construction activity and jobs. Each dollar invested in affordable housing infrastructure boosts local economies by leveraging public and private resources to lift resident earnings and local tax revenue, as well as to support job creation and retention. In fact, building 100 affordable rental homes generates \$11.7 million in local income, \$2.2 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 161 local jobs in the first year. Also, many projects funded through HUD have the added benefit of requiring

that some of the resulting jobs and small business opportunities go to public housing residents and other low-income people, who often miss out on opportunities other infrastructure projects create.

- **Promote economic mobility and community strength.** Without access to affordable housing, investments in transportation and infrastructure will fall short of creating vibrant communities. Increasing the supply of affordable housing – especially in areas connected to good schools, well-paying jobs, healthcare, and transportation – helps people climb the income ladder and leads to greater community development. Groundbreaking research shows that children living in affordable housing in neighborhoods of opportunity earn 31% more as adults and are more likely to live in better neighborhoods as adults. Other research shows that children living in stable, affordable homes are more likely to thrive in school, and that formerly incarcerated individuals who find stable, affordable homes are better able to reconnect with their families and transition back into their communities.
- **Stimulate economic growth.** Research shows that the shortage of affordable housing in major metropolitan areas costs the economy about \$2 trillion a year in lower wages and productivity. The lack of affordable housing acts as a barrier to entry, preventing lower-income households from moving to communities with more economic opportunities. Without the burden of higher housing costs, these families would be better able to move to areas with growing local economies where their wages and employment prospects may improve. High housing costs constrain opportunities for families to increase earnings, causing slower GDP growth. In fact, researchers estimate that GDP growth between 1964 and 2009 would have been 13.5% higher if families had better access to affordable housing.

For all these reasons, the Steering Committee of the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign respectfully urges you to consider including the following housing investments as part of a broader infrastructure package: **at least \$5 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF)**, a new tool exclusively focused on increasing the supply of affordable homes for those with the greatest needs; **at least \$15 billion to rehabilitate the public housing stock** to preserve this asset for current tenants and future generations; and a **targeted renters' tax credit**, which would reduce rents in housing developments designated by states to levels the lowest-income families can afford.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure that any infrastructure package includes a component of vital investments in affordable housing for those most in need. Please feel free to contact Mike Koprowski, National Director of the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign at mkoprowski@nlihc.org.

Sincerely,

Catholic Charities USA
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Community Catalyst
Food Research & Action Center
JustLeadershipUSA
NAACP
National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Social Workers
National Education Association
National League of Cities
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Women's Law Center
UnidosUS