

April 8, 2020

Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Tina Smith
Representative Angie Craig
Representative Tom Emmer
Representative Jim Hagedorn
Representative Betty McCollum
Representative Ilhan Omar
Representative Colin Peterson
Representative Dean Phillips
Representative Pete Stauber

Via email

Dear Senators and Representatives:

As Congress works to prepare a COVID-19 Response package 3.5 and 4, we urge you to include emergency rental assistance of \$100 billion, and expanded funding for critical housing needs. Emergency rental assistance was not included in the previous COVID-19 spending packages, yet it is critically needed by Minnesota individuals and families at the lowest income levels. Specifically, we - along with the national Opportunity Starts with Home campaign (opportunityhome.org) - request:

- **At least \$11.5B in Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)**
- **National moratorium on evictions + \$100B for emergency rental assistance**
- **Emergency funds for public housing and other HUD housing providers**

We write to you as endorsing organizations of the Minnesota Chapter of Opportunity Starts at Home. The Minnesota Chapter of Opportunity Starts at Home is a federal advocacy organization working to meet the housing needs of under resourced Minnesotans. We recognize the persistent racial disparities in access to stable housing and are focused on how housing insecurity is often linked to inadequate access to employment, mental health services, education, and other core needs. Housing is an intersectional issue, so it is important that our membership reflects the communities and organizations that must be marshalled to ensure that everyone has a place to call home. Despite the increasing number of cost-burdened renters and people experiencing homelessness in Minnesota, we know that there are proven solutions to ending homelessness and housing instability. The Minnesota Chapter of Opportunity Starts at Home is committed to organizing locally and acting at the federal level to secure the resources necessary to ensure that everyone has a home.

While federal and state eviction and foreclosure moratorium cover many housing situations, those bills are not excused and the consequences to renters and housing operators of non-payment can be catastrophic. Research by MHP shows some of the hardest hit jobs by COVID-19 in Minnesota, food prep and retail sales, would be left with just dollars for food, medicine, and other needs after paying rent with

unemployment insurance. While the federal government has provided critical but time limited supplements to UI, our economy will take much longer to recover than to shut down, increasing the importance of funds for rental assistance.

Specifically, Congress should create a permanent emergency assistance fund, like that proposed by Senators Bennet (D-CO), Portman (R-OH), Brown (D-OH), and Young (R-IN) in the bipartisan Eviction Crisis Act, modified to meet the immediate needs of COVID-19. Another option is resources for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP), which was successfully used after the 2008 financial crisis.

The signatories before are members of the newly formed Minnesota Chapter of the Opportunity Starts at Home campaign; we thank you for your work to date and look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

Catholic Charities of St Paul and Minneapolis
Community Stabilization Project
Guild Incorporated
HOME Line
Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers
Mental Health Resources
Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Minnesota
St Paul NAACP

See NLIHC's research that support \$100 billion:

<https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Need-for-Rental-Assistance-During-the-COVID-19-and-Economic-Crisis.pdf>

See Minnesota Housing Partnership COVID-19 Impact on Renters in Key Occupations:

<https://www.mhponline.org/images/COVID19/COVID19Renters.png>

See Emergency Assistance Fund Fact Sheet:

<https://www.opportunityhome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Emergency-Assistance-Fund-Fact-Sheet-FINAL.pdf>