



June 1, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 2051

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

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

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge the Senate to immediately consider the critical housing provisions contained within the “Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act” and move with urgency towards passage of a final COVID-19 relief bill. Every day of inaction puts millions of people at risk of eviction and homelessness. The “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)” included [\\$12 billion](#) in housing and homelessness resources, which was an important first step, but far more resources are needed to meet the urgent needs of people who are currently experiencing homelessness and people who are now on the brink.

We are not alone in our call to action. According to a new public opinion [poll](#), 87% of the public agrees that our elected leaders in Washington should “take major action to make sure everyone has stable, affordable housing during the coronavirus outbreak.” Nearly 8 in 10 people agree that “elected leaders are not putting enough attention on people’s need for help to pay for their housing during the coronavirus outbreak” and nearly 9 in 10 agree that “providing housing assistance to prevent evictions and homelessness during the coronavirus outbreak should be considered as urgent a priority as investments in healthcare.” By a 2:1 margin (67% to 33%), people agree “government should make major investments to ensure that people who cannot cover their housing costs can stay in their homes during the coronavirus outbreak and through the recovery, even if it means increasing the deficit.”

*Most Urgent Remaining Needs to Address Housing Instability and Homelessness*

To address the most urgent housing and homelessness needs in the next coronavirus package, Congress must include the following which were not fully addressed in the CARES Act. These urgent priorities are included in the “[HEROES Act](#)” and must be included in any final negotiated package:

- **\$100 Billion for Emergency Rental Assistance:** The nation is experiencing an unprecedented spike in unemployment, and job losses are expected to grow dramatically in coming months. Before the pandemic, millions of extremely low-income renters were already precariously housed, and their numbers are likely to grow significantly due to the unemployment spike. Emergency rental assistance enables people who have lost jobs to shelter in place and avoid housing instability. Temporary moratoria on evictions will help but still allow rent arrears to accumulate. People who have lost income as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak will struggle to cover large sums of back-rent once it comes due. During a pandemic, evictions and other types of housing instability worsen public health risks as well as increase hardship for individual families. To avert an unmitigated surge in evictions and avert the related health risks, Congress should provide a substantial amount of emergency rental assistance in the forthcoming bill. While the CARES Act’s stimulus checks and

expanded unemployment benefits will certainly help, they only last a short duration, some people will fall through the cracks even in the short term, and the vast majority of extremely low income renters will still remain cost-burdened by rent and at-risk of homelessness as they were before the outbreak. Clearly, the COVID-19 pandemic has made these longstanding housing challenges much more urgent. Finally, emergency rental assistance is also necessary so that landlords continue to receive rental income, which, in turn, enables them to operate their properties and ensures the continued viability of our country's essential affordable housing infrastructure. A recent [estimate](#) from the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that \$100 billion is required to keep the lowest-income households stably housed over the next year during and in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The HEROES Act includes the "[Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act](#)" proposed by Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-CA), Congressman Denny Heck (D-WA) and [145 House cosponsors and 35 Senate cosponsors](#) to provide \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance. According to the aforementioned poll, over one-third of all people in the U.S. say it is a big concern that they will lose their housing if they do not get additional assistance to help cover the costs. Ninety-three percent of people in the U.S. favor "providing emergency rental assistance for people who are struggling to afford the rent and are at serious risk of eviction as a result of the coronavirus outbreak."

- **At least \$11.5 billion for Homeless Assistance:** Congress provided \$4 billion in Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) in the CARES Act, but [additional funds](#) are needed to respond to coronavirus among people experiencing homelessness. Initial reports indicate that people who are experiencing homelessness and contract COVID-19 are much more likely to be hospitalized and require critical care and are much more likely to die than the general public. If unchecked, as many as 20,000 people who are experiencing homelessness could require hospitalization, further straining our already overstretched hospital systems, and nearly 3,500 could die. At least \$11.5 billion in ESG funds are needed to help service providers and crisis managers on the front lines: 1) minimize the number of people living in homeless encampments and congregate shelters; 2) create alternative space, such as hotels, for isolation and self-quarantine; and 3) provide short-term rental assistance and housing stabilization services. ESG funds should also be used to provide medical respite care, outreach, and street medicine for people experiencing homelessness. According to the poll, 90% of people favor "expanding funding for homeless assistance programs that minimize the number of people living in large shelters by providing them with alternative individual spaces for isolation and self-quarantine."
- **Uniform Moratorium on Evictions:** In the CARES Act, Congress instituted a temporary moratorium on new filings for foreclosures and evictions due to nonpayment for renters and homeowners in all federally subsidized housing, including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), and people living in properties covered by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). Several [states and localities](#) have instituted eviction and foreclosure moratoriums. This patchwork of responses provides relief to only some and creates confusion for all. Congress should implement a uniform, nationwide policy that clearly assures people that they will not lose their homes during a pandemic where our collective health depends on each of us staying home to minimize community spread. According to the poll, 89% of the public favors "enacting a uniform, nationwide policy that stops all evictions during the coronavirus outbreak."
- **At least \$4 billion for Housing Choice Vouchers:** Without these additional funds, many housing agencies will be forced to cut the number of families they assist to cover rising program costs driven

by families' job losses. (When family members lose jobs, the voucher subsidy grows to ensure that their housing remains affordable.) The "HEROES Act," if enacted, would fund 100,000 new emergency housing vouchers for people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or fleeing domestic violence. These new vouchers would provide sustained assistance to marginalized households with extremely low incomes to ensure their stability during the pandemic and economic recovery, and help them to avoid losing their homes or returning to homelessness. These vouchers are thus a critical complement to the other homeless and emergency rental assistance resources included in the "HEROES Act."

Thank you for considering these recommendations to address housing instability and homelessness during and in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. **The Senate should immediately consider these vital housing provisions contained within the HEROES Act and move with urgency towards passage of a final COVID-19 relief bill.**

Sincerely,

American Psychological Association  
Catholic Health Association of the United States  
Children's Defense Fund  
Children's HealthWatch  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Healthcare Anchor Network  
Healthy Schools Campaign  
JustLeadershipUSA  
Legal Action Center  
NAACP  
National Alliance on Mental Illness  
National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Community Action Partnership  
National Education Association  
National League of Cities

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium  
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence  
National Women's Law Center  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Prosperity Now  
RESULTS  
StriveTogether  
The Arc of the United States  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
UnidosUS  
Unity Health Care  
YWCA USA  
ZERO TO THREE