



February 9, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Susan Collins
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

The Honorable Kay Granger
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

The Honorable David Price
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC

To Chair Leahy, Ranking Member Shelby, Chair Schatz, Ranking Member Collins, Chair DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chair Price, and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

We write to urge that **a final FY22 spending bill includes the House proposal to expand Housing Choice Vouchers to an additional 125,000 households.** Unfortunately, the Senate bill does not include this important expansion of rental assistance, even though it is a key pillar of President Biden's housing platform and is central to any strategy to solve the nation's housing crisis.

Rental assistance is a critical tool for helping people with the lowest incomes afford decent, stable homes, and avoid homelessness. In the nation, a renter household needs an annual income of \$49,830 on average to afford a modest two-bedroom rental unit, which is far above the wages of many working families or the fixed incomes of many seniors and people with physical or mental health conditions that limit their ability to work. People of color disproportionately make up the population of renters with extremely low incomes. In fact, 20% of Black households, 17% of American Indian or Alaska Native households, 15% of Hispanic households, and 10% of Asian households are extremely low-income renters compared to only 6% of white non-Hispanic households are extremely low-income renters. In addition, single women renters—particularly single women of color and single women raising children on their own—are much more likely than single white, non-Hispanic men renters to have extremely low incomes. Even in properties that have been built with the help of robust construction subsidies, such as



the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, the rents (or operating costs) are typically unaffordable for individuals and families with extremely low incomes.

A substantial expansion of rental assistance for people with the lowest incomes is thus a key element of any successful strategy to solve the affordable housing crisis. But due to chronic under-funding and disinvestment, only 1 in 4 households eligible for a federal housing voucher will get the help they need. Rigorous research demonstrates that housing vouchers sharply reduce homelessness, housing instability, and overcrowding. In fact, children experiencing homelessness whose families received a voucher change schools less often, are less likely to be placed in foster care, experience fewer behavioral problems, and are more likely to demonstrate positive behaviors such as helping others or treating younger kids kindly.

Because they lower the cost of rent, vouchers also enable people to spend more of their disposal income on other basic necessities like nutritious food, medicine, and educational enrichment that fosters child development. Vouchers already lift millions above the poverty line, and numerous analyses show that they hold the potential to dramatically cut poverty even further and substantially reduce racial disparities. Moreover, rigorous research shows that when families use vouchers to move to neighborhoods with strong resources and high-performing schools, their children have substantially higher adult earnings, higher rates of college attendance, and lower rates of single parenthood. Adults in these families also see improved mental health and lower rates of diabetes and obesity.

The FY22 spending bill presents an opportunity to obtain a tremendous return on investment by expanding Housing Choice Vouchers to an additional 125,000 households. Top national organizations from a variety of sectors, including health, education, civil rights, food security, environmental protection, faith, municipal governance, child welfare, criminal justice, anti-poverty, and more, have come together through the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign to jointly push for these types of expanded investments. Despite their various issue areas, all these organizations understand that achieving their own goals depend on whether people have access to stable, affordable homes, and they understand that expanding rental assistance is a critical component of the overall solution.

The *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign stands ready to work with you on enacting these proven solutions. Thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

Sincerely,

Autism Housing Network
Children's HealthWatch
Church World Service
Healthcare Anchor Network
Institute for Educational Leadership
Justice in Aging
Legal Action Center
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Education Association

National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National League of Cities
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
RESULTS