November 22, 2022

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

As negotiations continue regarding the fiscal year 2023 federal budget, the undersigned organizations urge you to support the highest possible funding levels for Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs to create affordable housing and end homelessness, including:

- Fully fund the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) program to renew all existing contracts and expand housing vouchers to an additional 140,000 households. Housing Choice Vouchers help people with low incomes afford a place to live and move more families out of poverty.
- $5 billion for the Public Housing Capital Fund to preserve public housing and $5.04 billion for the Public Housing Operating Fund. These funds will help preserve the future of our nation’s public housing infrastructure for our lowest income households.
- $3.6 billion for HUD’s Homeless Assistance Grants program to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This program creates a strong foundation for locally managed homeless systems across the country to house the most vulnerable in their communities and provide support services people need to stay housed.
- $100 million for legal assistance to prevent evictions. Current funding for the entire country is currently only $20 million, even though eviction filings have generally returned to pre-pandemic levels.

In order to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment in Illinois, renters working full-time need to earn $22.80 per hour. At the same time, costs for necessities like food and transportation have also skyrocketed, leaving low-income renters with increasingly tighter budgets. With inflation breaking a 40-year record in 2022, many renters have had to make difficult decisions about their budget, sacrificing childcare, medical care, and food to maintain housing.

Our organizations are Illinois-based groups that work on issues, such as healthcare, workers’ rights, environmental justice and climate change, supporting independence for people with disabilities, promoting the well-being of families with young children and the social integration of refugees.

The people our organizations serve are increasingly struggling to maintain their housing in an environment with significant rent increases and rising cost with everyday needs such as food or gas—both for people who already have housing and those trying to secure housing.
Based on fair market rents for 2023, released by HUD on September 1, in 66 of Illinois’ 102 counties average rents have increased between 10% and 15% since 2021. This includes all of the Chicago metropolitan area. In 16 Illinois counties, fair market rents have increased anywhere between 16% and 25% during the past year.

For all of us, having access to affordable housing is a cornerstone of being able to prosper in life. Housing affects our physical and mental health especially for developing children. Moreover, a destabilizing event such as eviction, which the funding we are asking for is meant to lessen the likelihood of, can have a long-term negative impact on an individual’s health.

We thank you for supporting increased funding to create affordable housing and end homelessness in next year’s federal budget.

If you have comments or questions, please reach out to Foluke Akanni, Housing Policy Organizer for Housing Action Illinois at foluke@housingactionil.org or 312-854-3817.

Sincerely,

AIDS Foundation Chicago
Children’s Advocates for Change
Citizens Utility Board
Disability Resource Center
Elevate
Health & Medicine Policy Research Group
Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Illinois Environmental Council
Illinois Network of Center for Independent Living
IMPACT CIL
Lake County Center for Independent Living
LIFE Center for Independent Living
LINC, Inc.
Opportunities for Access
Progress Center for Independent Living
Refugee Action Network
SEIU Healthcare Illinois
Springfield Center for Independent Living
The Statewide Independent Living Council of Illinois
Working Families Solidarity