



April 21, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

To Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, House Speaker McCarthy, and House Minority Leader Jeffries:

We write to urge Congress to reject any proposal to cut domestic spending, including investments in affordable housing and homelessness, or cut housing benefits by imposing artificial time limits, work requirements, or rent increases. Rather than cutting housing and other domestic spending and making it harder to access housing benefits, **Congress should instead provide the highest level of investment possible for federal housing and homelessness programs through the annual appropriations process.**

Budget Cuts: With rents rising, eviction filings increasing, and more homelessness in many communities, federal housing investments are more critical than ever to sustain our communities and help low-income people thrive. Congress should invest in affordable housing at the scale needed, not balance the national budget on the backs of our nation's lowest-income and most marginalized people and families. Arbitrary budget caps on domestic spending, such as those established through the "Budget Control Act of 2011," would harm our nation and make our housing crisis worse. While Congress and the White House reached short-term agreements to provide limited budgetary relief from the Budget Control Act, the low spending caps led to disinvestment in key affordable housing and homelessness programs for a full decade, preventing our nation from making the investments needed to address the nation's housing and homelessness crisis.

Because of the Budget Control Act, investments in affordable housing have not kept pace with growing demand. As a result, millions of people do not have an affordable place to call home. Half a million people are living on the street, in shelters, or in their cars on any given night, and millions more are at risk. Every state and congressional district is impacted. Our nation cannot afford further cuts to these critical investments. Federal funding for the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Agriculture (USDA) Rural Housing Service programs provides essential resources to promote strong and healthy communities and help more than five million of the lowest-income and most marginalized seniors, people of color, women, people with disabilities, veterans, parents with children, and others afford stable and safe housing.



People of color would be hit hardest by cuts, as they disproportionately make up the population of renters with extremely low incomes. In fact, 20% of Black households, 18% of American Indian or Alaska Native households, 14% 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.

Cuts to Housing Assistance: Congress should reject proposals to cut housing benefits or create additional barriers to prevent eligible households from receiving the housing assistance they need. Proposals to cut housing benefits – whether by imposing work requirements, time limits, or rent increases – does not address the underlying causes of the country’s housing and homelessness crisis: the widening gap between wages and housing costs, and a severe shortage of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes. Imposing arbitrary restrictions on housing benefits will not create the well-paying jobs and opportunities needed to lift households out of poverty. In fact, these restrictions will make it more difficult for households to maintain employment and economic security.

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 expanded investments in affordable housing. 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](#) – not slashing – housing resources is a critical component of the overall solution.

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

Sincerely,

Black Girls Vote

Catholic Charities USA

Catholic Health Association of the United States

CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers

Children’s Defense Fund

Children’s HealthWatch

Church World Service

Civil Rights Corps

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Food Research & Action Center

Healthcare Anchor Network

Institute for Educational Leadership

Justice in Aging



Legal Action Center
Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance
Mobility Works
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association for Family Child Care
National Center for Complex Health and Social Needs
National Community Action Partnership
National Education Association
National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Nurse-Led Care Consortium
National Women's Law Center
Natural Resources Defense Council
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund
The National Domestic Violence Hotline
UnidosUS
Union for Reform Judaism
ZERO TO THREE