



*Department of Social Development and World Peace*

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October 9, 2007

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I am writing in strong support of HR 2895, the *National Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act of 2007*. The Catholic Bishops have historically urged the federal government to meet our nation's promise of a decent home for every American family.

The Catholic Community, through our Catholic Charities agencies, dioceses, and parishes, serves tens of thousands of men, women, and children who struggle to avoid homelessness and maintain adequate housing. Besides sheltering homeless people who turn to us for help, we have built, and maintain thousands of affordable housing units across the country. Our experiences have taught us that homelessness and inadequate, substandard housing destroys lives, undermines families, hurts communities, and weakens the social fabric of our nation. Despite our efforts—and the efforts of so many others—there continues to exist a severe shortage of affordable housing nationwide.

The Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University found that “housing affordability remains a pervasive problem. In just one year, the number of households with housing cost burdens in excess of 30 percent of income climbed by 2.3 million, hitting a record 37.3 million in 2005” (*The State of the Nation's Housing 2007*). Currently there exists no state in the union where a minimum wage worker can afford to rent even a one bedroom apartment at fair market rent.

The USCCB statement, *Putting Children and Families First*, notes: “Many families cannot find or afford decent housing, or must spend so much of their income for shelter that they forego other necessities, such as food and medicine.... [The Catholic bishops] support housing policies which seek to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing and help families pay for it.” We must put in place a sustainable source of funds to build affordable housing.

This National Affordable Housing Trust Fund presents Congress with a genuine opportunity to let the American people know that the housing needs of low-income families is a national priority. I urge your support for HR 2895 as one way to demonstrate how vitally important housing is to the well-being of families and our communities.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D.  
Bishop of Brooklyn  
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee