



Office of Domestic Social Development
3211 4th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Tel. (202) 541-3160
Fax (202) 541-3339



Catholic Charities USA
2050 Ballenger Avenue
Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel. (703) 549-1390

June 15, 2020

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing, and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing, and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Ranking Member Reed:

As the nation continues to deal with the impact of the coronavirus, federal support for the millions of families struggling with housing needs is imperative. We urge you to increase funding for housing programs serving families that are poor and vulnerable in the Fiscal Year 2021 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. Rising unemployment, compounded by increasing housing costs, have burdened poor and low-income Americans whose wages have not kept pace with rising expenses, forcing them to make tradeoffs and forego other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and transportation.

In our pastoral statement [*The Right to a Decent Home*](#), the Catholic bishops of the United States noted, “Since decent housing is a human right, its provision involves a public responsibility. . . . Government must supplement and regulate the activities of private individuals and institutions in order to achieve our housing goals. A creative partnership of private enterprise and government is necessary” (no. 75). The Catholic Church, inclusive of all its ministries, is one of the largest private providers of housing services for the poor and vulnerable in the country. We serve as many as we can, yet lack the resources to assist all our brothers and sisters in need.

Catholic Charities agencies provide housing services to over 146,000 people and homelessness services to over 400,000. Despite these efforts, Catholic Charities agencies have over 55,000 households across the country on waiting lists for housing. Over half of renters below the poverty line spend more than half of their income on housing. Only one in four households who are eligible for housing assistance receive help. In response to such widespread unmet need, HUD programs need more resources, not less.

Unfortunately, even with additional funding in the CARES Act, housing and community development programs continue to be underfunded and are unable to meet the growing demand for affordable housing. An increase to the HUD budget is urged to provide robust funding for the following programs:

- **Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Project-Based Section 8 Rental Assistance, and the Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund:** These tenant- and project-based rental assistance programs provide a lifeline for low-income families in need of affordable housing. However, with the supply of affordable rental homes decreasing and demand for rental assistance continuing to rise, funding for these programs continues to fail to keep pace with the need for affordable housing.
- **Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) Program:** Since its inception, “Section 202” programs have partnered with non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations, to expand housing for low-income elderly families dramatically. Over this time, nearly 400,000 units of housing for low-income elderly households have been produced, but construction of new units has dramatically decreased over the past decade. As the baby boomer generation enters retirement, the need for new “Section 202” housing construction is essential to meet the housing needs of seniors.

- **HOME Investment Partnership Program:** The need for affordable housing is at an all-time high, and the HOME Investment Partnership Program is vital to mitigating the problem. This program tangibly changes the lives of the poor by building, buying and rehabilitating affordable housing in blighted communities. Revitalizing buildings in poor communities serves as a catalyst for reducing crime and improving other social outcomes for poor citizens.
- **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants:** The Continuum of Care Program and Emergency Solutions Grants continue to make important contributions to reducing homelessness, particularly chronic homelessness. Continued support for these programs is critical for working toward the goal of ending family homelessness.
- **Housing Counseling Assistance:** As the housing crisis demonstrated, greater consumer awareness can safeguard against abusive lending practices and help to ensure that potential homeowners have the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions. Continued support for counseling assistance can protect against future abuses in the housing market while helping individuals achieve the goal of responsible homeownership.
- **Community Development Block Grant Program:** For many years, communities struggling to lift themselves out of poverty have turned to the CDBG for support in housing and economic development projects, including housing rehabilitation, blight removal, and infrastructure improvements. Economic development activities have created or supported over 400,000 jobs in the past ten years. Protecting these programs is vital for development in low-income communities and allows state and local governments the flexibility to continue identifying the areas and projects that are best suited to produce results.

In addition to the above programs, increased support for the Section 4 Capacity Development Block Grant, Housing for People with AIDS (HOPWA) and with Disabilities (Section 811), and Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) is necessary in order to continue to serve poor and vulnerable families across our country.

Robust investments in federal housing programs equip families and communities with the resources they need to thrive. Millions of unemployed families are on the brink of housing instability and at risk of homelessness. These programs satisfy the basic human right to shelter and should receive special attention, and thus, have our strong support as we continue to serve those in need.

Thank you for your consideration and support of people and families in need of stable housing.

Sincerely,



Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley
 Archbishop of Oklahoma City
 Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and
 Human Development
 U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



Sr. Donna Markham, OP, Ph.D.
 Executive Director
 Catholic Charities USA



Office of Domestic Social Development
3211 4th Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Tel. (202) 541-3160
Fax (202) 541-3339



Catholic Charities USA
2050 Ballenger Avenue
Suite 400
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel. (703) 549-1390

June 16, 2020

The Honorable David E. Price
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
and Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
and Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

As the nation continues to deal with the impact of the coronavirus, federal support for the millions of families struggling with housing needs is imperative. We urge you to increase funding for housing programs serving families that are poor and vulnerable in the Fiscal Year 2021 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. Rising unemployment, compounded by increasing housing costs, have burdened poor and low-income Americans whose wages have not kept pace with rising expenses, forcing them to make tradeoffs and forego other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and transportation.

In the pastoral statement [*The Right to a Decent Home*](#), the Catholic bishops of the United States noted, “Since decent housing is a human right, its provision involves a public responsibility. . . . Government must supplement and regulate the activities of private individuals and institutions in order to achieve our housing goals. A creative partnership of private enterprise and government is necessary” (no. 75). The Catholic Church, inclusive of all its ministries, is one of the largest private providers of housing services for the poor and vulnerable in the country. We serve as many as we can, yet lack the resources to assist all our brothers and sisters in need.

Catholic Charities agencies provide housing services to over 146,000 people and homelessness services to over 400,000. Despite these efforts, Catholic Charities agencies have over 55,000 households across the country on waiting lists for housing. Over half of renters below the poverty line spend more than half of their income on housing. Only one in four households who are eligible for housing assistance receive help. In response to such widespread unmet need, HUD programs need more resources, not less.

Unfortunately, even with additional funding in the CARES Act, housing and community development programs continue to be underfunded and are unable to meet the growing demand for affordable housing. An increase to the HUD budget is urged to provide robust funding for the following programs:

- **Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, Project-Based Section 8 Rental Assistance, and the Public Housing Capital Fund and Operating Fund:** These tenant- and project-based rental assistance programs provide a lifeline for low-income families in need of affordable housing. However, with the supply of affordable rental homes decreasing and demand for rental assistance continuing to rise, funding for these programs continues to fail to keep pace with the need for affordable housing.
- **Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) Program:** Since its inception, “Section 202” programs have partnered with non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations, to expand housing for low-income elderly families dramatically. Over this time, nearly 400,000 units of housing for low-income elderly households have been produced, but construction of new units has dramatically decreased over the past decade. As the baby boomer generation enters retirement, the need for new “Section 202” housing construction is essential to meet the housing needs of seniors.

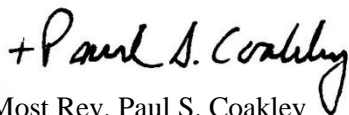
- **HOME Investment Partnership Program:** The need for affordable housing is at an all-time high, and the HOME Investment Partnership Program is vital to mitigating the problem. This program tangibly changes the lives of the poor by building, buying and rehabilitating affordable housing in blighted communities. Revitalizing buildings in poor communities serves as a catalyst for reducing crime and improving other social outcomes for poor citizens.
- **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants:** The Continuum of Care Program and Emergency Solutions Grants continue to make important contributions to reducing homelessness, particularly chronic homelessness. Continued support for these programs is critical for working toward the goal of ending family homelessness.
- **Housing Counseling Assistance:** As the housing crisis demonstrated, greater consumer awareness can safeguard against abusive lending practices and help to ensure that potential homeowners have the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions. Continued support for counseling assistance can protect against future abuses in the housing market while helping individuals achieve the goal of responsible homeownership.
- **Community Development Block Grant Program:** For many years, communities struggling to lift themselves out of poverty have turned to the CDBG for support in housing and economic development projects, including housing rehabilitation, blight removal, and infrastructure improvements. Economic development activities have created or supported over 400,000 jobs in the past ten years. Protecting these programs is vital for development in low-income communities and allows state and local governments the flexibility to continue identifying the areas and projects that are best suited to produce results.

In addition to the above programs, increased support for the Section 4 Capacity Development Block Grant, Housing for People with AIDS (HOPWA) and with Disabilities (Section 811), and Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) is necessary in order to continue to serve poor and vulnerable families across our country.

Robust investments in federal housing programs equip families and communities with the resources they need to thrive. Millions of unemployed families are on the brink of housing instability and at risk of homelessness. These programs satisfy the basic human right to shelter and should receive special attention, and thus, have our strong support as we continue to serve those in need.

Thank you for your consideration and support of people and families in need of stable housing.

Sincerely,



Most Rev. Paul S. Coakley
 Archbishop of Oklahoma City
 Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and
 Human Development
 U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops



Sr. Donna Markham, OP, Ph.D.
 President & CEO
 Catholic Charities USA