



Office of Domestic Social Development
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Catholic Charities USA
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May 24, 2022

The Honorable Brian Schatz, Chair
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
and Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chair Schatz and Ranking Member Collins:

Our Catholic organizations work with Congress every year on a range of our priorities, including protecting migrants and refugees, supporting the poor and vulnerable, and protecting the unborn. As you consider the Fiscal Year 2023 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we urge you to provide the highest level of funding possible for housing and community development programs serving families and individuals who are poor and vulnerable.

Inflation is taking a toll on the economic well-being of many families, especially those with the lowest incomes. The national median rent is almost 17 percent higher than it was a year ago,¹ and homeowners and renters alike expect it to increase 11.5 percent over the next year.² Housing already makes up a large portion of family budgets with 10.7 million low-income renter households spending over half their income on housing costs.³ These families cannot afford to keep up with rent increases. Targeted federal investments in programs that bring down the cost of housing and preserve and increase affordable housing supply can help families maintain stable housing.

In our pastoral statement [The Right to a Decent Home](#), the Catholic bishops of the United States teach that “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 we lack the resources to assist all our brothers and sisters in need. In 2021, Catholic Charities agencies provided housing services to over 180,000 people and homelessness services to over 400,000, provided housing counseling services to more than 15,000 households, and disbursed \$188 million in emergency rental assistance. Despite these efforts, Catholic Charities agencies have over 73,000 households across the country on waiting lists for housing. In response to such widespread, unmet need, HUD programs need more resources, not less.

With inflation on the rise, meaningful increases in the HUD budget are needed just to maintain housing for the same number of people currently served. Flat funding for housing and community development programs acts as a cut to vital services. Please 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 fails to keep pace with the need for affordable housing.

¹ Redfin, Rental Market Tracker (April 20, 2022), <https://www.redfin.com/news/redfin-rental-report-march-2022/>.

² Federal Reserve Bank of New York, *2022 SCE Housing Survey* (April 18, 2022), <https://www.newyorkfed.org/microeconomics/sce/housing#>.

³ National Low Income Housing Coalition, *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes* (April 2022), <https://nlihc.org/gap>.

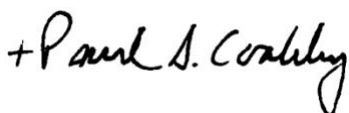
- **Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) Program:** Since its inception, “Section 202” programs have partnered with non-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations, to expand housing for low-income elderly families. Over this time, nearly 400,000 households have been served, but many more seniors are in need of this affordable, service-connected housing. Construction of new units has not kept pace with the rapid aging of the nation’s population. New “Section 202” housing construction is essential.
- **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 and pandemic demonstrated, income loss, rising medical costs, and unexpected expenses can suddenly jeopardize a family or individual’s housing. Housing counseling can provide assistance to renters seeking more affordable and stable housing choices, support those facing the risk of homelessness, advocate for those homeowners facing foreclosure and default, and educate homebuyers to be aware of abusive lending practices so they have the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions. Increased support for counseling assistance can protect against future abuses in the housing market while helping families and individuals achieve the goal of 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 10 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 Building for Community Development Block Grant, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA), Supportive Housing for Persons 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. Further, the freedom of faith-based shelters and other organizations to continue serving thousands of people in need at this time without violating their beliefs or the safety of their clients should be protected in any appropriations measure.

Robust investments in federal housing programs equip families and communities with the resources they need to thrive. We recognize there are many competing priorities as you move forward to enact final spending bills. The above programs, which satisfy the basic human right to shelter, should receive special attention.

Thank you for your consideration and for your 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



Sister Donna Markham, OP, Ph.D.
President and CEO
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The Honorable David E. Price, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
and Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
United States House of Representative
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

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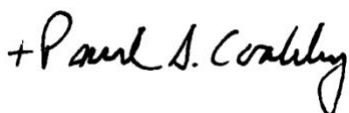
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