



July 8, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

As the association of local governments in the metropolitan Washington region, we write to ask that the next phase of COVID-19 legislation provide funding to ensure housing stability for those who are facing an increased risk of evictions and homelessness due to the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federal financial support is essential. The collective actions we have taken as local and state governments have had a major impact in slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our region, but they have also taken a heavy toll on our economy and significantly altered our fiscal outlook. To avert a surge in evictions and homelessness and to holistically address our most urgent housing needs, we respectfully request the following provisions be included by Congress in its next COVID-19 response:

- The **Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act (S. 3685/H.R. 6820)** for \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance;
- **An amendment and extension of the Eviction and Foreclosure Moratoria** provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act); and
- **Inclusion of at least \$14 billion in the HOME Investment Partnership Program** to allow a flexible and community-specific response to the current crisis.

The CARES Act included \$12 billion in housing and homelessness resources and other critical protections for low-income renters. This was an important first step, but far more resources are required. Research from the National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that at least \$100 billion in emergency rental assistance is needed.

This January, our region's annual count of persons experiencing homelessness resulted in the lowest number ever recorded since 2001, 9,763 people; however, this progress is threatened by the sudden economic recession. New research from Columbia University economics professor Dr. Brendan O'Flaherty projects an increase in homelessness by 40 to 45 percent this year over January 2019.

To avoid this catastrophic loss of housing stability, **the Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act** would offer states, localities, territories, and tribes flexible resources to provide direct support to households in need with short-and medium-term rental assistance or to

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cover up to 6 months of back rent and late fees. These funds are designed to reach people in need quickly and directly.

In addition, we urge Congress to consider amending and extending the **Eviction and Foreclosure Moratoria** provisions in the CARES Act to avoid further disruption to the housing market and prevent increases in homelessness.

Extending the CARES Act eviction and foreclosure moratoria, extending the multifamily forbearance allowances for smaller 1-4 unit properties, and aligning the timeframe to one year, would afford people more time to recover from the economic shock and job losses caused by the pandemic without fear of also losing their homes.

It is critical to note that it is not just renters and homeowners who are at risk, but also the affordable housing providers who need to respond to our region's continued demand for safe, accessible, and stable places to live. The creation of new housing was a top regional priority before the pandemic, but now it will require significant investments just ensuring that existing housing for lower-income households remains viable. Housing providers, for example, face increased operating costs to keep properties clean and safe. New construction projects are facing higher costs due to COVID-19, and without additional support, numerous planned housing developments will be put at risk.

To prevent this outcome, we ask Congress to consider **including at least \$14 billion in the HOME Investment Partnership Program** in the next comprehensive coronavirus package. The HOME program is one of the most flexible housing programs that Congress has enacted and allows for the nimble response that the current crisis requires.

Housing forms the foundation for economic mobility, academic success, and healthy living. The pandemic has made it clear that housing is health care. We also know housing is fundamental in helping shape a more equitable future. Even before the pandemic, people of color were significantly more likely to experience evictions and homelessness, the result of centuries of institutional racism and economic inequity. People of color will also likely experience greater burdens in the aftermath of the acute crisis. There's no stronger investment that we can make than in protecting and expanding housing options for all of our residents.

Now more than ever, state and local governments need financial support from the federal government so that we can continue to provide our residents with essential services and prevent them from being displaced from their homes and their communities in the middle of a global pandemic.

Thank you for your attention to these proposals.

Sincerely,