

August 23, 2021

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chair
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing, Development and Related Agencies

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing, Development and Related
Agencies

Dear Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Schatz, and Ranking Member Collins:

The undersigned organizations, which include a broad cross-section of stakeholders committed to enabling low-income families to live in affordable and decent quality housing in well-resourced neighborhoods that promote health and opportunity, urge your subcommittee to include in its appropriations bill for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 funding levels as close as possible to the amounts the President requested for additional housing vouchers, the administrative costs of administering the Housing Choice Voucher program, and a Mobility Services program. At the least, the Senate bill should include the amounts for each of these purposes that the House bill (H.R. 4550) would make available.

In this unprecedented time of economic uncertainty that threatens to consign hundreds of thousands of households to poverty—especially families of color, whose communities have long faced discrimination, and those who have been hard hit by the pandemic, including women and people with disabilities—federal funding for programs that help all families thrive is of the utmost importance.

Housing vouchers are an evidence-based tool that help about 2.3 million low-income households afford decent, stable housing in the private market. The 200,000 additional vouchers proposed in the President’s budget, which would be prioritized for people who are experiencing homelessness or are fleeing domestic violence or otherwise at risk of homelessness, would allow families facing severe housing insecurity to afford safe, decent quality, and stable housing. In addition, the budget includes a significant increase for administrative fees, with near full funding to agencies, enabling them to meet the needs of households they serve and manage the program more effectively. Fully funding administrative fees is critical to this end.

Low-income families who would like to use housing vouchers in neighborhoods that better fit their needs often face significant barriers. Tailored search assistance, proactive landlord outreach and incentives, and other types of support can break these barriers down and significantly improve families’ success in locating homes in neighborhoods of their choice. The proposed Mobility Services, which regular administrative fees aren’t adequate to cover, would enable selected housing agencies to provide robust services to expand housing options for families, particularly for families with children living in high-poverty areas who wish to move to well-

resourced communities with highly resourced schools, good air quality, or other opportunities that will best suit their needs.

Rigorous research shows that living in neighborhoods with high-performing schools, low rates of violence, and other opportunities can substantially improve children's health and chances of academic and economic success over the long term. Mobility is one important strategy toward this end, in addition to other investments in communities. The strong research base for housing mobility as an effective tool to disrupt the cycle of intergenerational poverty resulted in strong bipartisan support for the Housing Choice Voucher Mobility Demonstration Congress funded beginning in FY 2019.

Substantially more housing agencies are interested in providing mobility services to families than the 13 agencies in 9 communities HUD was able to fund under the Demonstration. Providing substantial additional funds under the proposed Mobility Services program will enable interested agencies with higher concentrations of voucher families with children in high-poverty neighborhoods to build on the evolving knowledge concerning cost-effective services gained from the initial phase of the Demonstration. The funding in the President's budget would enable more than 100 agencies to provide comprehensive mobility services to about 120,000 families over several years and build collaborations with other agencies in their area to streamline moves between jurisdictions, based on the cost estimates HUD is using for the Mobility Demonstration.

We hope that you can support these important funding proposals in the upcoming Senate THUD funding bill. Thank you for considering these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

Children's HealthWatch

Church World Service

CommonSpirit Health

Compass Working Capital

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force

Council of Large Public Housing Authorities

Enterprise Community Partners

Healthcare Anchor Network

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Apartment Association

National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO)

National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

National Community Action Partnership

National Council of State Housing Agencies

The National Domestic Violence Hotline

National Education Association

National Fair Housing Alliance

National Health Care for the Homeless Council

National Housing Law Project

National Leased Housing Association

National Low Income Housing Coalition

National Multifamily Housing Council

National Network to End Domestic Violence

National Nurse-Led Care Consortium

Opportunity Starts at Home Campaign

Poverty & Race Research Action Council

Public Housing Authorities Directors Association

RESULTS

Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future

Unity Health Care