

March [x], 2012

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Transportation and  
Housing and Urban Development  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Collins:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, we urge you to strongly support the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Homeless Assistance Programs and to fully implement the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, signed into law in 2009.

Homelessness persists as one of our nation's most pressing social problems and has grown more challenging in the wake of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Based on the 2011 Supplemental Annual Homeless Assessment Report, which HUD released in January 2012, on any given night, 636,017 people are homeless in America. Among these people, 107,148 are chronically homeless and 236,181 are persons in families. Now, more than ever, robust funding for Homeless Assistance Programs must be a priority so we can ensure that all individuals and families who are facing homelessness have a safe place to stay.

As you know, the HEARTH Act restructured HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs to incorporate nearly two decades of research and on-the-ground experience in ending homelessness. HUD homeless assistance funds are distributed through a unique, competitive process called the Continuum of Care in which federal funding is driven by local decision-making. Communities have worked to establish more cost-effective continuums that identify and fill the gaps in housing and services that are needed to move homeless families and individuals into permanent housing.

As we continue to recover from the economic downturn, it is imperative that the nation not lose ground in the struggle against homelessness, especially among Americans who have lost jobs through no fault of their own, those homeowners and families that are struggling due to the ongoing foreclosure crisis, and our veterans. Unfortunately, veterans, including those who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan, continue to be at a high risk of homelessness due to their elevated incidence of mental and physical injuries. As such, we also encourage the Subcommittee to provide robust funding for HUD's Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program. It is imperative that we do all we can to ensure that those who have served our country honorably do not then find themselves homeless.

Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Collins  
Homeless Assistance Funding

In closing, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee fully implement the HEARTH Act and robustly support the Homeless Assistance Programs in the FY13 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill.

Thank you for considering this important request and for your continuing leadership in helping to prevent and end homelessness in the United States.

Sincerely,