

Support the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants

March 5, 2008

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to join us in sending a letter to the Transportation and HUD Appropriations Subcommittee urging them to fund the Homeless Assistance Grants program in the Department of Housing and Urban Development at \$2.0 billion in FY 2009.

This amount is \$364 million above the President's budget request for the program and \$414 million over the FY 2008 level for this program.

The Homeless Assistance Grants program provides funding to states, cities and nonprofit organizations for emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing and supportive services to ensure that people experiencing homelessness achieve a basic level of safety and can make progress toward self-sufficiency.

It is imperative that we fund the Homeless Assistance Grants program at a level that will more appropriately support states and communities in their efforts to combat the growing problem of homelessness in rural, suburban and urban communities across the nation.

If you have any questions or would like to sign onto the letter, please contact Andrew Stevens (Rep. Moore) at x5-4572 or Andrew.Stevens@mail.house.gov or Lauren O'Brien (Rep. Davis) at x5-3465 or Lauren.OBrien@mail.house.gov by March 12, 2008.

Sincerely,

/s
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s
Geoff Davis
Member of Congress

The Honorable John Olver
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Related Agencies
2358 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Related Agencies
2349 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 12, 2008

Dear Chairman Olver and Ranking Member Knollenberg:

We respectfully urge you to provide \$2.0 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants in the FY 2009 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act. This funding request, \$364 million above the President's FY 2009 budget request, is a more appropriate investment level in HUD's homeless assistance program.

On any given night, 744,000 people are homeless in America, and approximately 3.5 million will experience homelessness at some point during the year. Alarming, approximately 44 percent of homeless individuals are unsheltered – literally living in parks, cars and campsites. The homeless population is comprised of families with children, veterans, individuals with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, unaccompanied youth and working poor single adults. Without assistance, these individuals and families will fall into illness, lag behind in education, miss out on crucial employment opportunities and remain unsheltered or poorly sheltered. We are well aware of your long record of concern regarding homelessness, a problem that is unacceptable in a nation as wealthy as ours.

Rural, suburban and urban communities in every State and Congressional district rely on the Homeless Assistance Grants program to mitigate the effects of homelessness. HUD homeless assistance funds are distributed to community-based, faith-based and public service providers, which are working tirelessly to provide a safety net to persons experiencing homelessness and to create pathways back to permanent, stable, affordable housing. HUD homeless assistance funds are used to support innovative approaches to prevent and shorten episodes of homelessness. Further, the funds support communities in the creation of a seamless continuum of care, including street outreach to help the homeless access mainstream services and supportive housing, emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent housing and the services necessary for homeless persons to return to and maintain safe and stable living arrangements.

The President's budget request of \$1.636 billion is insufficient to meet the emergency needs of many people experiencing homelessness in our nation or to significantly advance permanent solutions to the crisis. For example, estimates based on HUD data find the cost of renewing existing McKinney-Vento contracts in FY 2009 (including emergency shelter grants) to be approximately \$1.5 billion. Therefore, little of the President's request would be available for new projects, depriving the thousands of

homeless Americans who currently do not have access to a Homeless Assistance Grant-funded project of the opportunity to receive life-sustaining shelter or services. In addition, Congress and the Administration have slipped from the timetable for meeting the national goal of establishing 150,000 new permanent housing units by 2012. Significant additional funding is required in FY 2009 to get this goal back on track.

In our judgment, \$2.0 billion for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance grants would bring us closer to advancing the 150,000 unit permanent housing goal, while also providing resources for communities across the nation to address long-standing unmet emergency shelter, transitional housing and supportive service needs among the 3.5 million Americans who experience it annually.

Chairman Olver and Ranking Member Knollenberg, we urge the inclusion of \$2.0 billion in the FY 2009 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act for the HUD Homeless Assistance Grants program. Thank you for considering this request, and for your continuing support of this important program.

Sincerely,

/s
Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s
Geoff Davis
Member of Congress