



March 12, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

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

Policymakers are considering a legislative spending package aimed at addressing the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) on public health and the economy. **Any comprehensive response to the coronavirus should include emergency assistance funding to help prevent housing instability and homelessness as a result of the outbreak.** An emergency assistance fund would provide both short-term financial assistance and stability services to help households with the lowest incomes overcome an unforeseen economic shock that threatens their housing stability.

Most families living in poverty who rent are spending at least half of their incomes on housing, leaving virtually no margin for an unexpected expense. Temporary declines of income and unreimbursed medical bills can quickly send them down the spiral of housing instability, eviction, and even homelessness. With the coronavirus outbreak, many low-income, hourly wage workers may see reduced wages because they have fallen ill, they must care for a family member, or they are unable to work the hours they need. [Research](#) is clear that providing short-term crisis assistance to keep individuals and families stably housed is much cheaper to the taxpayer than incurring the myriad of long-term costs associated with housing instability, eviction, and homelessness.

To help ensure housing stability during the coronavirus outbreak, Congress should create a permanent emergency assistance fund, much like the one proposed by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Rob Portman (R-OH), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Todd Young (R-IN) in the bipartisan [Eviction Crisis Act](#), albeit somewhat modified to meet the immediate needs of the current outbreak. Congress could also consider providing resources for the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP), which was successfully used after the 2008 financial crisis and served as a model for the emergency assistance fund featured in the *Eviction Crisis Act*. Emergency assistance programs have a strong track record of success in places across the country and are among the most effective policy tools available to the federal government to stabilize people in times of crisis.

We are members of the Steering Committee and Roundtable of the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign, and we stand ready to work with you to ensure that the nation's coronavirus response includes this vital component. For further information, please feel free to contact Mike Koprowski, National Director of the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign at mkoprowski@nlihc.org.

Sincerely,

Catholic Charities USA
Children's Defense Fund
Children's HealthWatch
Community Catalyst
Food Research & Action Center
JustLeadershipUSA
NAACP
National Alliance to End Homelessness

National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Community Health Centers
National Association of Social Workers
National Education Association
National League of Cities
National LGBTQ Task Force
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Women's Law Center



Autism Housing Network
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Catholic Health Association of the United States
Community of Hope
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Family Promise
Habitat for Humanity International
Healthcare Anchor Network
Healthy Schools Campaign
Housing Choice Partners
Housing on Merit
Legal Action Center
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
National Community Action Partnership

National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Trust
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
Natural Resources Defense Council
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Poverty & Race Research Action Council
Prosperity Now
RESULTS
StriveTogether
The Arc of the United States
The Episcopal Church
Unity Health Care
ZERO TO THREE