

TALKING POINTS: McKinney-Vento, Housing Choice Vouchers, Trust Fund

*In recent years, HUD programs that have historically relieved inequality have been scaled back, despite the facts that incomes at the bottom of the labor market have remained stagnant while rents for modest apartments are going up faster. On any given night, 578,424 people experience homelessness, and the cities of Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle and state of Hawaii have recently declared states of emergencies. Congress needs to step up and enact bipartisan solutions. The recent budget deal provides a tremendous opportunity for Congress to provide significant new resources for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and make demonstrable progress toward ending homelessness in America. **There are three key things Congress should do in the final FY 2016 funding bill for homelessness and housing programs to capitalize on the opportunity the budget deal presents:***

- 1) **Provide \$2.480 billion for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program, including \$40 million for homeless youth initiatives.** A \$345 million increase over the FY 2015 final funding level to \$2.480 billion for McKinney would provide enough funding to maintain existing CoC and ESG capacity, while making important progress toward ending homelessness for chronically homeless people with disabilities, families, and youth. *(You can choose whichever population you work most closely with to focus in on when you call, or touch briefly on all three. Reference local data, newspaper articles, or client stories where you have them).*
 - Chronic homelessness refers to long-term or repeated homelessness among people with mental illness and/or physical disabilities, and chronically homeless individuals account for about 15 percent of the homeless population. Despite a strong history of bipartisan support for and the proven efficiency and cost-effectiveness of permanent supportive housing at ending chronic homelessness for this extremely vulnerable group of individuals, the past two years the deadline for ending chronic homelessness has been pushed back since McKinney has not received a sufficient funding increase to get the job done. The raised budget caps provide Congress the rare opportunity to finally provide the \$265 million to fund the 25,500 new units of supportive housing needed to end chronic homelessness by the end of 2017. It is uncommon to identify a cost-effective solution to a social ill, and THIS IS THE YEAR to make sure ending homelessness for this extremely vulnerable disabled population rises to the top of Congress' priority list.
 - The vast majority of families and individuals experience homelessness due to economic reasons, and rapid re-housing is a proven effective intervention for this population that is inexpensive relative to other housing solutions. Rapid re-housing involves: landlord mediation and other housing search service; payment of security deposits, move-in expenses, and short-term (4 to 6 months) rental assistance; and case management to forge connections to employment and other key services. The Administration's proposed \$2.480 billion would fund 15,000 new rapid re-housing interventions to end homelessness for families experiencing economic hardship, which would help build the resources needed to end family homelessness by the end of 2020.
 - There remains much to be learned about the prevalence of and most effective solutions to youth homelessness. Recognizing this, the Senate provided \$40 million for initiatives including demonstration projects, technical assistance, and a study on the prevalence and needs of homeless youth in its proposed bill. It is critical that the final FY 2016 funding level for McKinney includes \$40 million for these initiatives to jump-start work on ending youth homelessness.

- 2) Provide \$18.05 billion to renew all Housing Choice Vouchers in use at the end of 2015 and \$470 million to restore the remaining 60,000 vouchers lost due to sequestration.** Housing Choice Vouchers help 2.4 million households rent affordable housing in the private market. Many of these households would be homeless if not for the voucher. To get the greatest impact from these vouchers, they should be targeted to vulnerable populations. *Reference local data, newspaper articles, or client stories where you have them.*
- Due to the across-the-board “sequestration” cuts made in 2013 state and local housing agencies were forced to reduce the number of families using Housing Choice Vouchers. By July 2014 about 100,000 fewer families were using housing vouchers nationally. By June 2015 agencies had restored about 30,000 vouchers to use, and are poised to restore more by the end of the year.
 - Providing \$18.05 billion would renew all vouchers in use at the end of 2015. This would support the renewal of vouchers that agencies will have restored by the end of the year.
 - Congress should take this opportunity now to restore the remaining 60,000 vouchers to use. The Housing Choice Voucher program is the largest federal rental assistance program in the country. At a time when communities are poised to end homelessness even while incomes fail to keep pace with local rents, a permanent loss of HCVs would be unacceptable.
 - Providing \$470 million would restore the remaining 60,000 vouchers lost due to sequestration. Congress should target all these vouchers to people and families experiencing homelessness, veterans who are unable to receive HUD-VASH, tribal families, victims of domestic and dating violence, and families who are eligible for the Family Unification Program.
- 3) Protect funding for the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF). Don’t raid it to fund other programs.** The NHTF was authorized to address the housing needs of extremely low income (ELI) households, and is intended to be a permanent program with dedicated sources of funding, not subject to the annual appropriations process. The program is ready to be implemented; funds are expected to be available to states beginning this upcoming March. It is critical that Congress block any efforts to defund or prohibit HUD from administering the NHTF. *Reference local affordable housing data, newspaper articles, or client stories where you have them.*
- In particular, we strongly oppose the legislation passed by the House to direct all NHTF resources into the HOME program in FY 2016.
 - The NHTF is the only federal program that provides new money specifically to expand the supply of rental housing affordable to ELI households.
 - In 2016, 100 percent of the NHTF must be targeted to ELI households and at least 90 percent must be for the production, preservation, and operation of rental housing.
 - It is time to allow the NHTF to fulfill its intended purpose of providing additional funding to meet the unaddressed housing needs of millions of Americans.
 - *If you are asked the key differences between the NHTF and HOME programs, you can pull language from [this one pager](#).*