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Bipartisan Letter in Support of Increasing Funding for Public Housing

August 15, 2019

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
U.S. Senate
Committee on Appropriations
S-128 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
U.S. Senate
Committee on Appropriations
S-146 A The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Shelby, and Vice Chairman Leahy:

Thank you for all of your hard work and successful bipartisan efforts that brought an end to the threat of a sequestration which would have resulted in nearly \$125 billion of devastating cuts. This has been the largest increase our country has seen in base funding since the passage of the Budget Control Act. The budget agreement will enable Congress to invest in our rapidly aging infrastructure and to modernize our public housing stock. As Mayors and municipal leaders who represent urban, rural, and suburban localities across the country, we respectfully urge Congress to use this new budget space to increase funding for the vital federal housing programs that serve some of our most vulnerable communities.

Public housing programs were created by the federal government to provide safe rental housing for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income families. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that nearly 1.2 million households live in public housing units managed by 3,300 public housing authorities (PHAs). PHAs own and operate these developments while HUD provides capital and subsidies to support residents. These public housing tools are critical in helping families secure affordable places to live while

they work hard to procure other basic living necessities such as food, transportation, medical care, and child care costs.

Due to disinvestment in our rapidly aging housing stock we have lost nearly 139,000 public housing units nationwide since 2000. Severe housing problems are on the rise and have grown 41 percent since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2007. Each year PHAs accrue nearly \$3.4 billion in their capital needs backlog. The unmet need for decent, safe, and affordable rental housing outpaces the ability of PHAs to supply housing assistance. Although several localities have made historic capital investments to help preserve public housing, PHAs still need robust federal funding and support from Congress. In short, PHAs cannot afford to address these repairs without sufficient federal funding.

The rising cost of housing continues to exacerbate the homelessness epidemic gripping our nation. According to HUD, nationwide there are over half a million people experiencing homelessness. Public housing programs have the ability to improve the quality of life of our most vulnerable communities by providing them with a sense of stability that comes with permanently affordable housing. Therefore, it is essential for Congress to provide critical support for the federal housing programs and initiatives that seek to prevent homelessness.

As Congress continues to focus on the fiscal year 2020 (FY20) appropriations process, we ask for an adequate allocation of funding for HUD which supports these vital federally assisted housing programs. Specifically, we support increasing the Public Housing Capital Fund to \$5 billion and funding the Public Housing Operating Fund at 100 percent proration. Increasing funding for these two essential programs will help ensure that nearly one million families will continue to have access to safe, decent, and affordable housing. It will also provide PHAs across the country with much-needed resources to operate and maintain the public housing stock in our communities.

Thank you again for passing legislation to protect domestic spending levels. We look forward to continuing to support Congress as it works to make robust investments in our public housing stock which strengthens our communities and improves millions of lives. We stand with you and your colleagues as you continue to make critical investments in the social safety-net programs that make a real difference in our communities.

Sincerely,