

July 7, 2020

The Honorable David Price
Chair
Transportation, and Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart
Ranking Member
Transportation, and Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

The undersigned national associations represent for-profit and non-profit owners, developers, managers, housing cooperatives, lenders and housing agencies involved in the provision of affordable rental housing. As you begin the appropriations process, we urge the inclusion of a full-year funding package for Fiscal Year 2021 for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs. Furthermore, while ongoing and sustained support is needed for current agency programs, additional support will be needed to provide relief to American families and businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. The housing industry is on the front lines of responding to the COVID-19 outbreak in communities across the nation. Keeping people in their homes should be the top priority for lawmakers, but without rapid, bold, and comprehensive action, that may not be possible. Not only would that exacerbate the public health crisis the nation is facing, it could also cascade into a financial crisis that might rival 2008 if housing providers are unable to cover their debt, payroll, property taxes and operating expenses.

With the news of [40 million Americans](#) seeking unemployment benefits, the rental housing industry recognizes that a significant number of residents are being affected by furloughs or job loss. Moreover, as the crisis continues and renters' savings are depleted, these ongoing challenges will impact their ability to make ends meet and pay their rent, which could have cascading effects not only on the rental housing industry but on state and local governments and the broader economy. Information from the Census Bureau Survey released [July 1](#), from its newly created Household Pulse Survey, showed 46.3 percent of renters surveyed reported being unemployed. Losses are particularly acute for lower-income and minority households. In addition, Renter Confidence numbers reflect nearly one-third of renter respondents reporting no or slight confidence in whether they can pay next month's rent. At present, households are prioritizing rent, however, the information in the Household Pulse Survey provides a snapshot of problems on the horizon and with government direct assistance scheduled to expire at the end of this month, rental housing needs will only worsen.

Accordingly, it is critical that lawmakers come together to support America's 43 million renter households with a national rental assistance fund. If residents cannot pay their full rent obligations, housing providers will be at risk of not meeting their financial obligations as well. This puts the property and the whole community at risk at a time of needed housing stability. Congress worked to provide significant economic relief to affected Americans as part of the CARES Act. While the steps taken were significant, we remain concerned that despite these efforts, more assistance for renters and rental property owners will be needed. We believe that additional direct and sustained economic assistance to renters and their families will be necessary to ensure they are able to meet their financial obligations, including rent. For this reason, we support including funding for an emergency rental assistance program.

While creating an emergency rental assistance program is a top priority for the rental housing industry, continuing to assist the [5 million low-income](#) households served through the federal rental assistance programs is imperative; to do that our nation needs an appropriations process that provides certainty for both the people it serves, as well as housing providers.

Renters were already struggling before the pandemic. According to Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies, nearly half of all U.S. renters were cost-burdened, spending more than 30 percent of their monthly income on rent. One in four was severely cost burdened, spending more than 50% of their income to pay rent. The combination of the repercussions from the novel coronavirus, and the shortage in rental housing our nation was already experiencing, are driving the growing housing affordability crisis affecting our country. Uncertainty about funding places pressure on the market by raising concerns about the reliability of federal funding commitments among owners, managers, lenders, and residents.

We urge Congress to fully fund current HUD rental and housing cooperative assistance programs and to provide funding for an emergency rental assistance program for those impacted by COVID-19 at spending levels which enable property owners, both for-profit and not-for-profit, to properly administer the programs that serve those in need. Finally, not only is full-year funding for HUD programs imperative, we also urge you to take into consideration the needs of rural housing when addressing funding for United States Department of Agriculture housing programs.

Sincerely,

CCIM Institute
Council for Affordable and Rural Housing
Institute of Real Estate Management
Manufactured Housing Institute
National Affordable Housing Management Association
National Apartment Association
National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of Housing Cooperatives
National Association of REALTORS
National Leased Housing Association
National Multifamily Housing Council

cc: House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Appropriations