

Capitol Hill Day 2018: Congressional Talking Points

Homelessness is devastating. It takes a crippling toll on the people who experience it and their communities.

Homelessness makes it difficult for families to maintain employment and provide for their young children. Homeless children have poorer overall health and school performance, and an increased risk of future homelessness.

Homelessness makes it difficult for people to address physical health, mental health, and addiction issues. It takes years off of a person's life. Homelessness is often associated with the onset and progression of complicated and costly health conditions, and many people cycle through costly emergency systems to meet their acute needs.

Unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness are more likely to be victims of crimes, including sex trafficking, and to experience significant trauma before adulthood.

Homelessness also affects communities. People experiencing homelessness frequently engage with hospital emergency rooms, first responders, and the criminal justice system. Sometimes the cost to these public systems exceeds what it would cost to rehouse them. Homelessness is not only costly, but demoralizing to the community – a visual representation of its inability to take care of its own.

We are ending homelessness. We know what it takes, and we've made incredible progress toward ending homelessness. Since 2007, homelessness across the country has decreased by 15 percent. Meanwhile, communities and even states across the country have announced that they have ended veteran and chronic homelessness.

In our own community... [share a highlight of your progress toward ending homelessness]

But until we sufficiently fund the programs and systems that do the work, we will only see marginal progress. It is also essential that we protect the evidence-based frameworks and interventions that have driven our progress to date.

1. Congress should provide at least \$2.8 billion for HUD'S McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants in FY 2019.

- *The need:* Homelessness affects more than half a million Americans on any given night.
 - *Share the current situation of homelessness in your community or state. Your state sheet might be a helpful visual.*
- *The solution:* HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants program is at the core of Federal efforts to end this crisis. McKinney-Vento funds a systematic approach with evidence-based interventions that work.
 - *Share the success of local McKinney-funded programs. Explain the models involved and how they fit in your crisis response system.*

2. Congress should provide \$22.8 billion for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance in FY 2019.



- *The need:* Affordable housing is scarce, and despite a widening gap between rising rents and sufficient resources to pay the bills for many American families, only 1 in 4 eligible low-income households receives federal rental assistance.
 - *Share the impact of affordable housing scarcity in your community or describe the waitlist for resources.*
- *The solution:* Federal rental assistance provides affordable rental housing for more than 5 million people in 2.2 million households. With rents typically set at 30 percent of the household's income, these programs create the most accessible housing opportunities for people with incomes below the poverty line.

It is essential that any FY 2019 spending is sufficient to renew all housing vouchers that will be used in 2018. Congress should continue these investments to keep up with rising rents and accommodate the significant number of eligible households who languish on wait lists across the country. However, this will not be sufficient to keep up with increased need for vouchers. Congress should fund new vouchers, including special purpose vouchers like 811 “mainstream” or HUD-VASH, to reduce homelessness and move additional families out of poverty.

- *Explain the role of affordable housing in ending homelessness in your community.*

3. Congress should permanently authorize the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).

- *The need:* While USICH's annual budget is only a modest \$3.6 million, the agency is responsible for coordinating approximately \$5.5 billion in various funding streams. But, because the original legislation to establish USICH included a sunset date for the Council, its continued funding is uncertain every year. Without legislation to permanently authorize USICH, this uncertainty will always jeopardize future progress to end homelessness.
 - *If applicable, describe how USICH's regional team has supported your work to end homelessness, or how the resources USICH provides have been helpful in your efforts.*
- *The solution:* Both chambers should take up the companion bills H.R. 5393, The Working Together to End Homelessness Act of 2018; and S. 743, A Bill to Strengthen the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and send the final bill to the president for signature and implementation.

4. Congress should reject any proposals that impose new or stricter work requirements on safety net programs.

- *The need:* Recipients of social safety net resources often need increased education or employment. Evidence-based employment and training interventions are the key to meeting this need.
 - *If applicable, share about employment programs or interventions working in or with your homeless services system, and their impact on helping individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency.*



However, instead of funding these interventions, the Administration and Congress have already made a number of efforts to more broadly impose work requirements in various programs. Evidence shows that work requirements don't move people out of poverty or off of social safety net rolls.

- *The solution:* Voluntary programs that encourage training, education, and increased employment should be scaled up across the country.