

Capitol Hill Day 2018: Federal Policy Priorities to End Homelessness

We know how to end homelessness, but until we sufficiently fund the programs and systems that do the work, we will only see marginal progress across the country. It is also essential that we protect the evidence-based frameworks and interventions that have driven our progress to date. Below is a summary of the National Alliance to End Homelessness' Federal Policy Priorities for 2018. You can find more details regarding these priorities in corresponding materials.

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

Homelessness affects more than half a million Americans on any given night. 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 that works, and sufficient funding for these programs can end homelessness.

An investment of \$2.8 billion represents a \$287 million increase over the FY 18 level, and would end homelessness for 25,000 more households, allowing communities to keep up with rising numbers of people losing their housing due to increasing rents.

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

Since 1980, housing affordability has been the key driver of increases in homelessness. This nationwide crisis is due to decreases in affordable housing stock, insufficient wages and benefits to keep pace with rising rents, and an increasing number of households paying more than half their income for rent.

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 to reduce homelessness and move additional families out of poverty. In total, we recommend that Congress provide \$22.8 billion for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance in FY 2019.

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

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.

It is essential that both chambers of Congress pass legislation to permanently authorize USICH. 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.

Evidence shows that work requirements don't move people out of poverty or off of social safety net rolls. However, voluntary employment programs can significantly boost employment without the negative impacts of abruptly ending assistance before recipients have achieved stability.

The Administration and Congress have already made a number of efforts to more broadly impose work requirements in various programs.

Congress should reject any bills that would broadly apply work requirements to Medicaid nationally. Further, Congress should reject any proposals that include work requirements or restrict access to essential safety net programs for the most vulnerable Americans. Instead, voluntary programs that encourage training, education, and increased employment should be scaled up across the country.