

NATIONAL
HEALTH CARE
for the
HOMELESS
COUNCIL

June 5, 2017

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Van Hollen:

The National Health Care for the Homeless Council (NHCHC) is a membership organization representing federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) (and other providers) that target health services to people experiencing homelessness. As health care providers caring for a vulnerable population that lacks stable housing, we are very concerned about the Administration's proposed budget cuts to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), particularly as they impact people experiencing homelessness. We are glad to see the Committee holding hearings to examine the impact of these cuts, and hope Secretary Carson can articulate how his agency will be able to fulfill its mission under such austerity.

People who are homeless tend to have poor health and a wide range of health conditions that make it more difficult to keep and maintain housing as well as participate in health care treatment plans. Much research has shown that once individuals gain stable housing, they are better able to address these health care problems. Because of the direct relationship between lack of housing and health, it is imperative that HUD's leadership understand the key to preventing homelessness is to provide affordable housing solutions (often with support services). Failing to do so will continue the current cycle of homelessness with accompanying high-cost hospitalizations, unemployment, and disability.

During the HUD budget hearings, we request the following questions be posed to Secretary Carson for discussion:

1. **Preventing homelessness:** It is better to prevent someone from becoming homeless than to try to re-house them. As the old saying goes: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Likewise, homelessness can be prevented, but the nearly 11 million households spending more than half their income on rent are at significant risk of homelessness. *Can the Secretary explain to the Committee how the current budget doesn't exacerbate homelessness due to its significant cuts in housing assistance? Can he further explain how he plans to prevent homelessness for those households who are living on the edge of eviction?*

2. **Impact of housing on health:** HUD has made tremendous progress to aligning housing and health care programs at the state and local level, resulting in improved health and lower overall costs. *Given the significant reductions being proposed to housing assistance, how does the Secretary foresee these will impact that progress, and how will these impact the physical and mental health status of those currently receiving HUD assistance?*
3. **Supportive housing:** In the past few years, HUD has prioritized housing assistance be allocated to the most vulnerable individuals and families, and specifically directed states to dedicate supportive housing assistance to those with the greatest needs. This has significantly reduced “chronic” homelessness among those with complex health conditions. *Does the Secretary anticipate that HUD will continue to prioritize the most vulnerable for assistance, and how does he envision HUD’s role in supportive housing programs?*

Thank you for considering these questions for Secretary Carson during the budget hearings. If you would like to talk further about how housing and health care are critical needs for people who are homeless, please contact Regina Reed, MPH, Health Policy Organizer, at 443-703-1337 or rreed@nhchc.org.

Sincerely,



G. Robert Watts
Chief Executive Officer