

Include the Emergency Housing Assistance for Older Adults Act In Next COVID-19 Relief Package

July 2, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

The below national organizations urge your co-sponsorship and support for the Emergency Housing Assistance for Older Adults Act of 2020. The bills, introduced by Representative Katie Porter and Chairwoman Maxine Waters, and Senator Robert Menendez respectively, offer precisely the COVID-19 relief needed by HUD affordable senior housing communities.

Inclusion of the bills' provisions in the next COVID-19 relief package will help the more than 770,000 older adults (62+) who are served by HUD's Section 202 Housing for the Elderly and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance programs in more than 10,000 apartment communities across the United States.

Relief Needs of HUD-Assisted Senior Housing Communities

The coronavirus is disproportionately harming older adults and racial minorities. There are about 400,000 Section 202 Housing for the Elderly homes and about 370,000 additional Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (non-Section 202) homes headed by older adults. According to HUD, the average income of Section 202 and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance households is less than \$14,000 a year. And, 17% of the residents of these HUD-assisted senior communities are 85 years old or older.

In addition to serving older adults, HUD-assisted housing renters are more likely to be African American than their non-HUD assisted peers. Of all renters, 21.4% are African American; of residents of privately-owned HUD-assisted housing (such in the largest of HUD's such programs, Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance and the Section 202 Housing for the Elderly), 38.2% are African American.

Further, HUD-assisted older adults are more likely than their non-HUD assisted peers to have chronic health conditions. Research from the Department of Health and Human Services tells us that HUD-assisted Medicare - Medicaid enrollees are significantly more likely to have five or more chronic conditions than Medicare - Medicaid enrollees without housing assistance (54.5% vs. 43.1%). Meanwhile, HUD-assisted older adults with Medicare are more likely than non-HUD-assisted older adults to be dually enrolled in Medicaid (70% vs. 13%).

Resident Services and Unbudgeted Costs

The bills would provide \$845 million for the Section 202 Housing for the Elderly and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance programs to pay for cleaning and disinfecting, staff support, personal protective equipment, and costs for addressing critical needs that have arisen solely because of COVID, including grocery and meal delivery, security, and covering the cost of units that may have to be vacant for a bit longer than usual because of the pandemic.

Successful Service Coordination

The bills would also provide \$300 million to support and expand HUD's successful Service Coordinator program, and make clear, as Congress authorized in 2011, that Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities communities are eligible for HUD Service Coordinator funding. Only half of HUD-assisted

senior housing communities have a Service Coordinator, staff whose value to residents aging in community has become only more obvious during the pandemic.

Bridging the Connectivity Gap

The bills also support \$50 million for the installation and service fees for wireless internet in HUD-assisted senior housing communities. The lack of internet throughout most Section 202 Housing for the Elderly and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance has significantly hindered residents' ability to access telehealth services, safely learn about opportunities and programs within their own communities, overcome language barriers, and combat the negative physical and mental health effects of social isolation.

Integrated Wellness and Housing Support

Finally, the bills provide \$7 million for a one-year extension of HUD's 40-site Integrated Wellness in Supportive Housing demonstration. Extension of the IWISH demonstration, set to sunset on September 30, 2020, is needed as soon as possible so the demonstration-funded Wellness Nurses and Service Coordinators can continue their critical work.

We urge your office to contact [Kaylee Niemasik](#) in Representative Porter's office, [Elayne Weiss](#) in Chairwoman Waters' office, and [Erika Calderon](#) in Senator Menendez's to co-sponsor the bills.

Sincerely,

American Association of Service Coordinators
B'nai B'rith International
Center for Disability Rights
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force
EHDOD
Enterprise Community Partners
HEARTH
HumanGood
The Jewish Federations of North America
Justice in Aging
LeadingAge
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
National Affordable Housing Management Association
National Alliance of HUD Tenants
n4a
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)
National Association for County Community and Economic Development
National Caucus & Center on Black Aging
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Housing Trust
National Leased Housing Association
National Well Home Network
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF)
Technical Assistance Collaborative
Volunteers of America
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)