

June 27, 2018

Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC

Dear Representatives:

The undersigned national organizations are deeply supportive of the work that our nation has done to make progress on the problem of homelessness. We encourage the Committee to continue its leadership in this regard. We ask the Committee to reject policy changes such as HR 1511 that would greatly expand the number of people eligible for HUD's homelessness programs without expanding the resources available, and/or take away HUD's ability to prioritize effective practices.

HR 1511 would expand eligibility for HUD's homeless assistance to include all families and youth who are poor and living with others for economic reasons, but without providing any more funding. This change would make millions of additional people eligible for HUD homeless assistance. It would swamp a homeless system that is already unable to serve over a third of those eligible (35 percent of homeless people are unsheltered, and that percentage is growing). With hugely increased demand and no new resources, families, children and unaccompanied youth with no place at all to live would find it harder and harder to get help.

Second, HR 1511 prohibits HUD from setting priorities. This would take away a powerful tool for coordinating with other agencies, implementing effective practices, moving forward on a plan to end homelessness, and making the most of the funding that is available. Reduction over the past ten years in people living on the streets and in shelters, even in the face of the nation's recent economic difficulties, has been a bipartisan success story. HUD's Homeless Assistance programs have been central to this progress. HR 1511 would abandon the keys to success.

Third, HR 1511 includes an unfunded mandate on communities to conduct a count of doubled-up families, an expensive undertaking with dubious impacts on the quality of data about this problem.

We are concerned about the larger problem of housing affordability, including its impact on the millions of Americans in doubled-up households. We believe, however, that the small part of HUD's budget allocated to homelessness programs must be targeted toward those who have no viable housing at all. Problems that some eligible homeless families or youth have in accessing homeless assistance are being addressed by alternatives that do not hurt the overall effort. For these reasons, we oppose any policy such as HR 1511. We hope to continue to work with this Committee to have a positive impact on homelessness, and on the problem of housing affordability.

Community Solutions
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force
CSH (Corporation for Supportive Housing)
Council of State Community Development Agencies
Enterprise Community Partners
Habitat for Humanity

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Local Initiatives Support Corporation
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors
National Coalition for Homeless Veterans
National Housing Conference
National Low Income Housing Coalition
The Technical Assistance Collaborative
Volunteers of America