



October 22, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear President Biden, Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the 1.7 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, I strongly urge you to continue to support the investments in affordable housing in the Build Back Better agenda.

The skyrocketing cost of housing undergirds the economic insecurity of working families and solidifies soaring income inequality. More than 10.5 million households spend more than 50 percent of their monthly income on rent. Crushing rents make saving for a home or even coping with an emergency impossible for far too many families. It is not a coincidence that in a climate of unaffordable housing, 40 percent of American families cannot shoulder a \$400 emergency. This crisis is not limited to low-wage workers in high-cost urban cities; it affects the working poor and the middle class in urban, rural and suburban communities across the country. According to the National Housing Conference's Paycheck to Paycheck database, secondary school teachers don't earn enough to buy a home in Boston, Phoenix or Portland, Ore. For teachers in West Virginia's most rural communities, housing near where they teach is often nonexistent.

In 2011, the AFT began Reconnecting McDowell, a public-private partnership aimed at reinvigorating McDowell County, W.Va. Naturally, we gravitated toward issues affecting McDowell's schools, however, housing for teachers quickly emerged as a great challenge and could not be ignored. A complete lack of teacher housing forced teachers to commute hours to school and constrained the school district's ability to recruit and retain teachers. After years of work by community members, with AFT staff leading the development and significant financial support from the AFT, we broke ground on a four-story apartment building to house educators, built with 100 percent union labor. While we are deeply proud of this collaboration and its result, it does not make up for the decades-long lack of federal investment in affordable housing. We are at a historic

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Nurses and Health
Professionals

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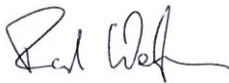
moment when federal investments that have been postponed, diminished or delayed can finally begin to be reversed.

I commend Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) for her leadership in introducing the Housing Infrastructure Act of 2021 and the Ending Homelessness Act of 2021. The federal housing investments in the Build Back Better agenda are a critical step; your commitment to making sure they make it into the final reconciliation package is vital.

Failing to address housing in the upcoming reconciliation package would be a moral failure and a missed opportunity for the middle class and all those families struggling so hard to enter the middle class. For many families, a lack of affordable housing is not only a matter of being financially squeezed; it means they may not have a roof over their heads at all. More than 580,000 Americans are experiencing homelessness. Addressing this crisis is essential to rebuilding an economy that enables working families to thrive, and it is a key part of this agenda.

Thank you for all your tireless work to level the playing field for families and rebuild an economy that rewards work, not just wealth. We look forward to partnering with you to pass and implement the Build Back Better agenda.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randi Weingarten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Randi Weingarten
President, American Federation of Teachers

RW : emc opeiu #2 afl-cio