

June 28, 2005

To: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

Re: Funding for the Housing Choice ("Section 8") Voucher Program

As members of the faith community, we are writing to express our concern about funding for the Section 8 housing voucher program, and to ask that you vote to increase funding for vouchers when the FY 2006 TTHUD spending bill comes to the floor of the House of Representatives.

Our organizations work with millions of low-income individuals and families who, despite their best efforts, are struggling to meet their basic needs. For many of these families, high housing costs present a major hurdle in this struggle, often forcing them to choose between paying rent and paying for food, clothing, prescriptions and medical care, transportation to work, and other essentials. The Section 8 voucher program offers critical assistance to two million such families, allowing them to live with dignity in decent, safe, and stable housing. Through our work, we are witness to the important role that housing vouchers play in preventing homelessness, and in helping families whose members are unemployed, working low-wage jobs, or living on fixed incomes to make progress towards economic stability and self-sufficiency.

Congress has for many years expressed a strong commitment to the Section 8 voucher program, consistently voting to fully fund all vouchers. We were therefore disappointed to learn in January that HUD had announced a 4-percent cut in voucher renewal funding for FY 2005, despite Congress' intention to fully fund renewals for this year. This cut, which is equivalent to 80,000 housing vouchers, has reduced the availability of affordable housing in hundreds of communities around the country.

For FY 2006, the House Appropriations Committee has recommended increasing funding for Section 8 vouchers by \$765 million, which is well below the President's request of over \$1 billion. While the Committee recommendation would likely be sufficient to renew vouchers currently in use, it falls well short of restoring those vouchers that have been lost due to the FY 2005 funding shortfall.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler and other Members of the House are expected to introduce an amendment to increase Section 8 funding by \$100 million in the House bill. This amount would restore funding for approximately 15,000 vouchers, thereby helping 15,000 poor families obtain decent, stable housing in the coming year. While more is needed, this amendment provides an important step forward in supporting these families. We therefore ask you to support the amendment with your vote.

As faith organizations, we are committed to strengthening our communities by assisting those who are the most vulnerable, and we believe that our work is not simply a matter of charity, but of responsibility and justice. We urge you to assist us in our work by renewing Congress' commitment to fully fund and expand the Section 8 voucher program.

Sincerely,

Call to Renewal  
Catholic Charities USA  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Lutheran Services in America  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office  
Union for Reform Judaism  
The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society