

November 2, 2005

The Honorable Kit Bond
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Joseph Knollenberg
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John W. Olver
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Bond, Ranking Member Murray, Chairman Knollenberg, and Ranking Member Olver:

With conference negotiations on the Fiscal Year 2006 Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act beginning, the undersigned groups would like to express our views on the importance of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program.

We have followed H.R. 3058 as it has developed over the last year in the House and Senate, and we wish to lend our collective voice in support of full funding for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. We urge you to provide appropriations for this vital program that are near or at the level in the President's 2006 budget. We also oppose any across the board cuts that will only lead to extreme hardship for many hard working families and the homeless.

Because this program is such a vital component of a community's efforts to house low income families, it is extremely important that the allocation of these funds be based on up to date information. We believe that the Senate funding formula, which maintains a "budget based" approach while distributing funds to local agencies based on their leasing rates and costs from the most recent 12 months, is preferable to the House formula. The House formula continues to base its funding on a three month snap shot that may not be representative of an agency's funding needs, and recent experience has shown that this funding approach has left many families and communities vulnerable. To ensure that vouchers currently in use will continue to be funded, we urge the conferees to accept the Senate funding formula.

We also oppose any attempt to overhaul the voucher program through the appropriations process and recommend that, as in the past, any programmatic changes be deferred to the authorizing committees.

While Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers serve approximately two million low income households -- many of whom are working families with children, the elderly, or people with disabilities -- there is a waiting list for vouchers in most communities in our country. And with increased poverty, and so many families left homeless after the Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma we urge Congress to provide adequate funding and an effective funding formula for this vital program, which is needed now more than ever.

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies
Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio
Corporation for Supportive Housing
Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office
Crossroads Urban Center, Utah
Housing Minnesota/Minnesota Housing Partnership
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National AIDS Housing Coalition
National Alliance to End Homelessness
National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders
National Council on Independent Living
National Housing Conference
National Low Income Housing Coalition
NETWORK, a National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Washington Office
U.J.A. Federation of New York
United Jewish Communities
Utah SOS 8
U.S. Jesuit Conference