

April 15, 2020

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of the New York Housing Conference and 15 partners listed below, we urge you to include robust homeless and housing funding in the next round of COVID-19 assistance. While there was limited emergency housing assistance in the CARES Act, it is becoming clear that the money appropriated will be helpful but not nearly enough to deal with the housing disruptions that are coming from the health and economic effects of the coronavirus.

The data we are seeing — from the health crisis to the housing instability of people before the crisis and the signs of the coming economic and housing effects of the crisis — are staggering. In New York state there are 202,208 Covid-19 cases and there have been 10,834 deaths according to the most recent data.<sup>i</sup> To slow the spread, the state has implemented social distancing, causing many businesses to close temporarily, putting people out of work, which will add economic effects on top of the health effects, likely hitting vulnerable populations hardest.

In New York state there were more than 92,000 people experiencing homelessness<sup>ii</sup> before the crisis and there were hundreds of thousands more that were at-risk of homelessness in the state, including 1.7 million rent burdened households,<sup>iii</sup> 285,000 households living in crowded situations,<sup>iv</sup> and one million households with at least one household member working in an occupation vulnerable to job loss during social distancing.<sup>v</sup>

The early signs of economic and housing disruptions are very troubling. In the past three weeks there have been almost 17 million new unemployment filings nationally<sup>vi</sup> with almost 800,000 in New York state,<sup>vii</sup> and a poll by the National Small Business Association found that nearly half of small businesses have already seen reduced business.<sup>viii</sup> With these economic challenges, the link to housing is becoming clear. Data from the National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC)'s rent payment tracker found that only 69 percent of households paid their rent through Apr. 5, a 12 percentage point decrease from the 81 percent that had paid their rent through March 5.<sup>ix</sup>

These all point to the need for significant housing assistance in the next Congressional aid package, including \$11.5 billion in funding for homelessness, \$100 billion for rental assistance, \$5 billion for public housing operating funds, direct assistance to residential property owners, and a national moratorium on evictions and foreclosures.

As we recover from the health crisis, more funding will be needed. This funding will help protect housing stability and will also be an important countercyclical tool to help the economy recover. The country will need \$70 billion in public housing capital, \$45 billion in the National Housing Trust Fund, expanded rental assistance, emergency assistance to prevent evictions, and increasing Low Income Housing Tax Credit and Private Activity Tax-Exempt Bonds.

Attached is a full list of recommendations that will be necessary for emergency relief and for economic recovery. The effects of the COVID-19 health crisis are unprecedented and we need to respond quickly and with sufficient resources to keep people housed, stable and healthy.

Thank you for considering this request and for your continued advocacy for affordable and public housing for New Yorkers in need.

Sincerely,



Rachel Fee  
Executive Director  
New York Housing Conference

In partnership with:

Center for New York City Neighborhoods  
Citizens' Committee for Children of NY  
Coalition for the Homeless  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation  
Habitat for Humanity NYC  
Homeless Services United  
Fortune Society  
The Legal Aid Society  
LiveOn NY  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Regional Plan Association  
RiseBoro  
Supportive Housing Network of New York  
Win NYC

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<sup>i</sup> Coronavirus in the U.S.: Latest Map and Case Count, New York Times. Data comes from state and local health agencies, hospitals and C.D.C. data. Retrieved Apr. 7, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html#states>

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Point in Time Count. 2019. <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hdx/pit-hic/>

<sup>iii</sup> New York University Furman Center analysis of U.S. Census American Community Survey data

<sup>iv</sup> New York University Furman Center analysis of U.S. Census American Community Survey data

<sup>v</sup> What are the Housing Costs of Households Most Vulnerable to Job Layoffs? An Initial Analysis. New York University Furman Center. March 30, 2020. <https://furmancenter.org/thestoop/entry/what-are-the-housing-costs-of-households-most-vulnerable-to-job-layoffs-an>

<sup>vi</sup> Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims, U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/ui/data.pdf>

<sup>vii</sup> Unemployment Insurance Weekly Claims, U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/ui/data.pdf>

<sup>viii</sup> NSBA Small Business Impact Poll – COVID-19. National Small Business Association. March 2020. <https://nsba.biz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NSBA-COVID-19-Poll-2020.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> NMHC Rent Payment Tracker, National Multifamily Housing Council. <https://www.nmhc.org/research-insight/nmhc-rent-payment-tracker/>. Accessed Apr. 10, 2020.