

June 23, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As a collection of housing and homelessness experts and elected officials representing New York State, we are deeply appreciative of your efforts throughout the last year to provide emergency relief for struggling tenants and for your continued support for policies that would boost the overall supply of affordable housing in New York and beyond. To take those efforts to the next level, we urge you to capitalize on a historic opportunity to address the root of a long-standing and worsening housing crisis impacting every American – but especially those in your respective constituencies.

The current debate over a sweeping infrastructure investment package is the ideal environment to push for transformative housing policies that may have been considered impossible even just several months ago. As you well know, housing *is* both physical and social infrastructure, benefitting the families who are securely housed, as the communities in which it is built, and the economy through job and revenue creation. We write to encourage you to make bold change and a lasting impact by: 1) Establishing a housing safety net by providing Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to all eligible households; 2) Preserving public housing; and 3) Expanding affordable housing supply.

### **Establish a Housing Safety Net**

COVID-19 created a dual public health and economic crisis that exacerbated the already staggering housing needs of New Yorkers. In New York, over 90,000 people experience homeless and over 143,000 public school children live in unstable housing. Almost 2.7 million New Yorkers live in poverty and almost 1 million low-income households pay more than half their income on rent, but current federal rental assistance programs do not reach many in need: 75 percent of eligible households do not receive any assistance. By expanding the rental assistance program to include all eligible households, you would immediately reduce the nation's poverty rate by 25 percent – a historic achievement that would materially benefit millions of lives.

With President Biden promising this change on the campaign trail, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to establish a real housing safety net for families and individuals across the country. As such, we urge you to fight for Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to be moved to the mandatory side of the budget and fully funded to serve all eligible households.

### **Preserve Public Housing**

Public housing is a vital part of our nation's infrastructure. More than 400,000 individuals live in public housing in New York alone, with the overwhelming majority served by the largest housing authority in the county, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). Unfortunately, NYCHA alone has an immediate capital need of \$40 billion as a result of decades of federal neglect. Until that gap is closed, hundreds of thousands of residents will continue to experience substandard living conditions that threaten their physical and economic well-being. In order to address the public housing crisis, the final infrastructure package should include at least \$80 billion in capital for public housing needs.

### **Expand Affordable Housing Supply**

New York, like the rest of the country, has a severe shortage of affordable housing that lies at the root of the housing crisis: the state is almost 650,000 units short for very low- and extremely low-income renters. Existing barriers to expanding supply make it more difficult to close this gap, even after recent changes to the 4 percent Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. While the LIHTC has been an effective tool and economic driver, serving over 500,000 low-income households, supporting 350,000 jobs annually and generating billions in wages and revenue in New York alone, more can be done to improve its efficiency.

We are calling for provisions to strengthen and expand LIHTC including a 50 percent increase to housing credit allocations and a lowering of the 50 percent threshold of private activity bond financing required for the 4 percent housing credit. HUD-assisted housing should be exempt from counting towards a state's bond volume cap, which would significantly increase private investment in federally- assisted housing and ensure preservation for the next generation. Further, we are calling for an expansion of the National Housing Trust Fund (HTF) to \$45 billion annually — \$26 billion of which would be dedicated to supportive housing for those experiencing homelessness and have the greatest barriers to achieving housing stability. This would ensure deep affordability for the lowest income households where the need is most urgent. Combined with establishing a housing safety net, expanding affordable housing supply would allow New York to transform homelessness from an ever growing crisis to something that is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

As we move from crisis to recovery, now is the time to invest in affordable housing. With historically low interest rates, federal funding will leverage significant private investment. It will also provide an opportunity to take advantage of a changing real estate market. With distressed commercial real estate including hotels and underutilized offices, federal resources can help facilitate affordable housing conversions at scale.

We are grateful to have a Congress that understands the importance of affordable housing. As leaders of the House and Senate, it is in your power to take action and ensure this historic investment has the greatest impact. Together, the following organizations and elected officials call on you to act with urgency to include critical funding for affordable housing that serves all those who need it.

We would welcome a meeting with you or your respective staffs to go over any of these issues in more detail, and we look forward to building a more affordable country alongside you.

Sincerely,



Rachel Fee  
Executive Director  
New York Housing Conference

**In partnership with the following 31 New York State Senators, 34 New York State Assembly Members, 2 New York City Borough Presidents, 11 New York City Council Members, 6 New York City Mayoral candidates and 97 organizations:**

**Elected Officials:**

NYS Senator Joseph Addabbo  
NYS Senator Toby Ann Stavisky  
NYS Senator Jamal Bailey  
NYS Senator Alessandra Biaggi  
NYS Senator Samra Brouk  
NYS Senator Leroy Comrie  
NYS Senator Jeremy Cooney  
NYS Senator Mike Gianaris  
NYS Senator Andrew Gounardes  
NYS Senator Pete Harckham  
NYS Senator Michelle Hinchey  
NYS Senator Brad Hoylman  
NYS Senator Robert Jackson  
NYS Senator Anna Kaplan  
NYS Senator Brian Kavanaugh  
NYS Senator Liz Krueger  
NYS Senator John Liu  
NYS Senator John Mannion  
NYS Senator Rachel May  
NYS Senator Shelley Mayer  
NYS Senator Roxanne Persaud  
NYS Senator Jessica Ramos  
NYS Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick  
NYS Senator Gustavo Rivera  
NYS Senator Sean Ryan  
NYS Senator Julia Salazar

NYS Senator James Sanders  
NYS Senator Diane Savino  
NYS Senator Luis Sepúlveda  
NYS Senator James Skoufis  
NYS Senator Kevin Thomas

NYS Assembly Member Brian Barnwell  
NYS Assembly Member Didi Barrett  
NYS Assembly Member Charles Barron  
NYS Assembly Member Chris Burdick  
NYS Assembly Member Robert Carroll  
NYS Assembly Member Sarah Clark  
NYS Assembly Member Catalina Cruz  
NYS Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz  
NYS Assembly Member Taylor Darling  
NYS Assembly Member Maritza Davila  
NYS Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz  
NYS Assembly Member Steve Englebright  
NYS Assembly Member Harvey Epstein  
NYS Assembly Member Patricia Fahy  
NYS Assembly Member Mathylde Frontus  
NYS Assembly Member Sandy Galef  
NYS Assembly Member Emily Gallagher  
NYS Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas  
NYS Assembly Member Richard Gottfried  
NYS Assembly Member Judy Griffin  
NYS Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi  
NYS Assembly Member Pamela Hunter  
NYS Assembly Member Anna Kelles  
NYS Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani  
NYS Assembly Member John McDonald  
NYS Assembly Member Steven Otis  
NYS Assembly Member Amy Paulin  
NYS Assembly Member Karines Reyes  
NYS Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez  
NYS Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal  
NYS Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal  
NYS Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright  
NYS Assembly Member Amanda Septimo  
NYS Assembly Member Latrice Walker

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer  
Queens Borough President Donovan Richards

NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson  
NY City Council Member Margaret Chin  
NY City Council Member Robert Cornegy  
NY City Council Member Karen Koslowitz  
NY City Council Member Brad Lander  
NY City Council Member Mark Levine  
NY City Council Member Carlos Menchaca  
NY City Council Member Bill Perkins  
NY City Council Member Carlina Rivera  
NY City Council Member Helen Rosenthal  
NY City Council Member Rafael Salamanca

**Mayoral Candidates:**

Eric Adams  
Shaun Donovan  
Kathryn Garcia  
Ray McGuire  
Maya Wiley  
Andrew Yang

**Organizations:**

New York Housing Conference  
A. Larovere Consulting and Development  
The Arker Companies  
Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)  
Bowery Residents' Committee (BRC)  
Breaking Ground  
CAMBA  
Catholic Charities POP Development  
Center for Urban Community Services  
Chinatown BID/Partnership  
Citizens Action of New York  
Citizens Committee for Children  
Citizens Housing and Planning Council  
Citywide Council of Presidents NYCHA  
Coalition for the Homeless  
Coalition for Homeless Youth  
Community League of the Heights Inc. (CLOTH)  
Community Preservation Corporation (CPC)  
Community Service Society of New York  
Concern for Independent Living  
CREA, LLC  
CSH  
CUCS

Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation  
Designing the We  
Douglaston Development  
Enterprise Community Partners  
ERASE Racism  
Fifth Avenue Committee  
The Fortune Society  
FPWA  
Gateway Housing  
Geto & de Milly, Inc.  
GF55 Architects  
Goddard Riverside  
Good Old Lower East Side – GOLES  
HANAC  
HELP USA  
The Health & Housing Consortium  
Homeless Services United  
Hope Community, Inc.  
Housing Rights Initiative  
The Hudson Companies  
IMPACCT Brooklyn  
Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing  
JRW Strategies  
Kinetic Communities Consulting  
Lappin Associates  
The Legal Aid Society  
LiveOn NY  
LISC NYC  
LISC NYS Housing Stabilization Fund  
Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)  
MBD Community Housing Corp.  
Mega Contracting  
Met Council on Housing  
MHANY Management Inc.  
Monadnock Development  
Neighborhood Restore HDfC  
Neighbors Helping Neighbors  
New Destiny Housing  
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition  
NYC Housing Partnership  
NYS Rural Advocates  
New York State Council of Churches  
NYSFAFH  
NYSPHADA

OAR of Tompkins County  
Omni New York LLC  
Open Hearts Initiative  
Open New York  
The Osborne Association  
Phipps Houses  
Project Hospitality  
Radson Development  
RDC Development  
Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY)  
Regional Plan Association (RPA)  
RiseBoro Community Partnership  
Robin Hood Foundation  
Rockabill  
RxHome NYC  
The Samuels Group  
Selfhelp Realty Group (SRG) – The Melamid Institute for Affordable Housing  
Settlement Housing Fund, Inc.  
Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation  
SKA Marin  
Southside United HDFC – Los Sures  
St. Mary's Park Houses Resident Council  
St. Nicks Alliance  
Supportive Housing Network of New York  
Tenants Political Action Committee  
Two Trees Management  
UNHP  
United Neighborhood Houses  
Wavecrest Management  
Win