



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May xxxx, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
The U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
The U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

We write to respectfully request that you include provisions to support children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness during this crisis in the anticipated fourth supplemental package addressing the ongoing novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). While we appreciate that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act included some funding related to homelessness, most children and youth experiencing homelessness are not eligible for a majority of services provided through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Emergency Solutions Grant, nor does this program meet their unique and complex needs. Dedicated funding is needed through the programs and systems that are best positioned to help them immediately, and ensure their long-term stability.

Homelessness harms the health, development, safety, and education of children and youth. The longer a young child experiences homelessness, the more that negative outcomes are magnified, causing lifelong effects on the child, and in turn, the family and community. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, public schools determined a record 1.5 million homeless children and youth, aged preK-12, for the most recent year reported (2017-2018) within our school systems. The U.S. Department of Education also estimates that 1.4 million children under age six are experiencing homelessness and national research from the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall found that approximately 4.2 million youth ages 13-25 were homeless on their own during a 12-month period. The current economic crisis, and family stress related to shelter-in-place orders, are expected to create new waves of youth and family homelessness.

The experience of homelessness also has a damaging impact on academic achievement. Based on reporting from 49 states, the 2017-2018 national average graduation rate for homeless students was 67.8 percent; more than 10 percent below other low-income students (79.5 percent). The low

graduation rate of homeless students is of particular concern because lack of a high school degree or GED is the single greatest risk factor for homelessness as a young adult. Finally, homeless youth and young adults are at great risk of victimization and assault. Recent data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline shows that being a homeless youth and living in unstable housing are two of the top risk factors for human trafficking.

Now more than ever, these children and youth need our attention. The coronavirus outbreak has created even more barriers to their survival, and to accessing the programs and services they need to regain their footing. We urgently request the following:

- At least \$300 million for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has 45 years of expertise in holistically preventing and serving young people experiencing homelessness by building relationships with youth, meeting their immediate needs, providing short and long-term residential services, and conducting prevention and outreach efforts to move youth out of homelessness. Of this amount, \$150 million will be disbursed to existing RHYA grantees and the remaining funds will be used to expand services through new grants.
- At least \$500 million for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education and reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act, removes barriers to school enrollment, attendance, and success caused by homelessness. Under the law, every local educational agency must designate a local liaison to ensure the identification of homeless children and youth, as well as school access, stability, and coordination of services. School closures have been devastating for homeless children and youth; they have lost one of the safest and most stable places in their lives. In considering this request, it is noteworthy that Congress has provided supplemental support through the EHCY program in the past, both in response to the recession in 2008, as well as three different disaster-related spending bills.
- At least \$2 million for an online curriculum that will train parents, teachers, and students how to recognize the indicators of trafficking. This is needed now when students are spending even more time online with their peers.
- At least \$25 million in supplemental funding for existing Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) trafficking grantees to provide direct survivor support and operate the National Human Trafficking Hotline.
- At least \$2 billion for a Family Stabilization Fund to provide flexible funding for community organizations to meet the unique needs of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness. This funding would allow youth- and family-serving agencies to provide immediate support to children, youth, and families, no matter where they happen to be staying – including those who are ineligible for HUD homeless assistance because they do not meet HUD's narrow definition of homelessness. Providing housing-related and other services to children, youth and families experiencing homelessness as early as possible will reduce transmission of COVID-19, and mitigate compounding trauma and negative lifelong impacts of homelessness.

In combination, this request will bolster and expand the vital work of key federal programs to help move homeless children, youth, and families from crisis to stabilization, healing, and, ultimately, self-sufficiency. This holistic approach will help ensure that prolonged homelessness does not result from the coronavirus outbreak, and that we protect the futures of our most vulnerable children, youth, and families.

We urge you to prioritize their needs in the next supplemental package. This will help to stabilize and support vulnerable children and youth during the outbreak and recovery, and also help to prevent entrenched chronic adult homelessness in the future. Thank you for your time and attention on this important matter.

Sincerely,

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress