



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

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April 4, 2012

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Latham, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Susan M. Collins, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John W. Olver, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Murray, Chairman Latham,
Ranking Member Collins, and Ranking Member Olver:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to address the moral and human dimensions of the Fiscal Year 2013 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

As bishops, we see firsthand the pain and suffering in our communities and in our parishes caused by homelessness and lack of affordable housing. The Catholic community is one of the largest private providers of housing services for the poor and vulnerable in the country. We shelter the homeless, develop affordable housing for families and people with disabilities, counsel families at risk of foreclosure, and provide housing and care for those at the end of life. At a time when the need for assistance from HUD programs is growing, cutting funds for them could cause thousands of individuals and families to lose their housing and worsen the hardship of thousands more in need of affordable housing.

The Catholic bishops urge you to protect funding for programs that serve poor and vulnerable people, such as Housing for the Elderly (Section 202) and People with Disabilities (Section 811), Housing for People with AIDS (HOPWA), Veterans Affairs Supported Housing (HUD-VASH), McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance, and Tenant- and Project-based Rental Assistance, as well as other programs that are vital to ensuring that vulnerable Americans have safe and affordable housing.

I also reiterate our concern with proposals to increase the minimum amount of rent that can be charged to families receiving housing assistance. Minimum rent provisions most often affect the poorest and most vulnerable families--they already struggle to live in dignity. At a time when low-income workers'

wages are stagnant and food and gas costs are rising, we should not take steps to increase housing costs for very low-income families.

Affordable housing programs have not been protected in various budget and deficit agreements, and as a result many families are at further risk of being pushed into poverty. Congress still faces serious challenges about how to balance needs and resources and allocate burdens and sacrifices. We urge you to draw a circle of protection around the programs that serve “the least among us.”

In *A Place at the Table*, the Catholic bishops of the United States wrote:

The Catholic way is to recognize the essential role and the complementary responsibilities of families, communities, the market, and government to work together to overcome poverty and advance human dignity (p. 18).

I encourage you to support and adequately fund programs that provide decent and affordable housing for poor and vulnerable people and their families. The Catholic Bishops stand ready to work with you to advance this important moral and human challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen E. Blaire". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Most Reverend Stephen E. Blaire
Chairman

Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

Cc: The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
The Honorable Harold Rogers
The Honorable Thad Cochran
The Honorable Norman D. Dicks