



July 7, 2017

Dear Member of Congress,

Nearly every faith tradition across the United States shares a common understanding and call to end homelessness in our communities and alleviate insufficient access to affordable housing. But lack of access to affordable housing in recent years has produced an immense challenge for those striving to these ends. The Interreligious Working Group on Domestic Human Needs, a faith-based coalition representing the voices and leaders of some of the largest religions and faith-based organizations in the country calls on you to strengthen policies and housing investments in the FY 2018 federal budget, and ensure that people have a place to call home.

As people of faith, we are instructed by many sacred texts to shelter the most vulnerable from harm. In countless ways, houses of worship are working hard to reach that goal: providing emergency shelter, affordable housing, assisted living and many other critical services for people in need. Faith-based communities provide at least 150,000 emergency shelter and transitional beds on a given night, and the number of individuals experiencing chronic homelessness has steadily fallen by nearly 31% from 2007 to 2015. Having a safe place to call home, we recognize, is essential for the wellbeing of the whole person - giving people the opportunities to thrive and succeed.

Religious groups, faith-based social service agencies, and federal programs are working collectively in communities, offering a multi-pronged approach to addressing complex issues like chronic homelessness. However, despite recent successes in lowering homelessness, much more still must be done to address the systemic affordability crisis, housing poverty, and rising rents throughout the nation. Cuts to affordable housing programs do not show love to neighbors in need of shelter, and the Administration's recently proposed \$6.2 billion decrease in FY 2018 HUD funding does not show love for our neighbor. As you and your colleagues in Congress prepare for next year's budget, our diverse denominations and service providers hope that you will continue to champion housing investments for the most vulnerable communities.

Affordable housing is not just an issue for our diverse coalition of faith traditions. Fighting to secure a safe place for the least of these to lay their heads should be a moral imperative for all.

People cannot live without food, water or shelter. Please do your part to make sure everyone can enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in a place they can call home.

Peace be with you.

Sincerely,

Bread for the World

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Province Leaders

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Faith Action Network: Washington

Friends Committee on National Legislation

National Advocacy Center for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Episcopal Church

The Office of Social Justice of the Christian Reformed Church

The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society

Union for Reform Judaism