



December 21, 2023

Dear Member of Congress,

With the winter getting colder, as religious denominations, faith-based service providers, and members of the Interreligious Working Group on Domestic Human Needs (DHN), we are compelled to reach out to urge you and your colleagues in Congress to provide the highest funding levels possible for affordable housing and homeless assistance programs in the fiscal year (FY) 24 federal budget to address the present homelessness crisis. We collectively pray that this does not get overlooked in the conferencing process or a long-term continuing resolution.

The number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness in our country has been rising since 2016. Experiencing unsheltered homelessness accelerates aging and disease, and many people die of treatable conditions. Annually on December 21, National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day, we somberly remember those who died while experiencing homelessness the past year. This coincides with the winter solstice, the coldest and darkest part of the year when people living outside in our country are at the highest risk of dying from health conditions or fatal overdoses.

Our diverse theological teachings collectively challenge us to give shelter to the vulnerable and serve those of us in the greatest need. For generations, houses of worship and faith-based providers have worked hard to those ends: providing homeless assistance across the spectrum from crisis response to permanent supportive housing, building affordable housing, and offering services for people struggling with homelessness or at risk of eviction. Having a safe place to call home, we recognize, is essential for the well-being of the whole person, giving people opportunities to not only survive but shift from a daily focus on survival to living out God's purpose for their lives.

Now, inflation, a high cost of living, and historic lows in the supply of affordable housing are resulting in more people becoming homeless, which has become an urgent concern for our religious institutions and ministries. Courageous leadership and support from the federal government is needed to help us meet the moment. Our denominations and service providers hope you will champion robust funding levels for affordable housing and homeless assistance programs in the FY 24 budget and seek other ways to address the larger affordability crisis.

We pray that we'll have less names to read of those who've died without a home in our memorial services next winter. Thank you for your service and consideration.

Peace be with you.

Church World Service

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Dorothy Day Catholic Worker, Washington DC

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Franciscan Action Network

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Sojourners-SojoAction

The Episcopal Church

The Salvation Army National Headquarters

Union for Reform Judaism

Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice