**FY2020 Appropriations: HUD’s Homeless Assistance Grants and Affordable Housing**

* US House bill: HR 3163 – Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2020

Each year, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awards Homeless Assistance Grants to communities that administer housing and services at the local level. Specifically, the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) formula grant program and the competitive Continuum of Care (CoC) program fund the cornerstones of each community’s homeless system. The ESG grant funds street outreach, homeless prevention and diversion, emergency shelter, and rapid re-housing. The CoC program funds permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, transitional housing, coordinated entry, and demonstrations like the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program.

There are also four program accounts in appropriations bills that represent almost all Federal spending for affordable housing assistance for people with the lowest incomes:

* Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) — this includes the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program (“Section 8”), Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers, and Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers
* Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA) — formerly known as “Project-Based Section 8,” this program provides rent subsidies for many privately owned affordable housing programs
* Public Housing accounts:
* Operating Funds — used by Public Housing Authorities for day-to-day costs
* Capital Grants — used for larger scale building repairs or maintenance

NAEH Policy Briefs

* FY2019 Appropriations (McKinney-Vento) - <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HAG-McKV-2019-FINAL.pdf>
* FY2019 Appropriations (Housing Choice Vouchers) - <https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HCV-2019-v2-FINAL.pdf>

NAEH Take Action

Without adequate funding for the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Grants program, our communities can’t end homelessness. Use this form to send a letter to your representative in support of $3 billion in Homeless Assistance Grants funding for FY 2020.

**1. Enter your contact information to find your representative.**

**2. Edit a brief introduction to tell your representative who you are, what you do, and why you’re writing.**

**3. Send the letter!**

<https://endhomelessness.org/actions/tell-congress-fund-homeless-assistance-grants/>

Actual Bill: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3163>

House Committee on Appropriations: <https://appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/appropriations-committee-releases-fiscal-year-2020-transportation-housing-and>

**Expanding Eligibility For HUD-VASH to Military Personnel Discharged with an “Other than Honorable” Basis**

* US Senate Bill: S.2061
* US House Bill: H.R. 2398

Chronically homeless veterans who have been other than honorably (OTH) discharged are not receiving the housing and service to end their homelessness. H.R. 2398 and S. 2061 would make these veterans eligible for the highly effective HUD-VASH program. Although an OTH discharge is the most severe administrative discharge a veteran can receive, it is not a punitive discharge, and should not be confused with a dishonorable (“bad-conduct”) discharge.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (Alliance) is working with Congressional lawmakers to address the concerns raised by providers. Legislation (H.R. 2398) introduced by Representative Scott Peters (D-CA) and 12 bipartisan cosponsors would make OTH discharged veterans eligible for HUD-VASH benefits. The lawmaker estimates that as many as 1,000 homeless OTH veterans in need could finally take advantage of HUD-VASH benefits.

The bill enjoyed strong, bipartisan support at a markup in May of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. The House Financial Services Committee, which also has jurisdiction over the legislation, may give additional consideration to the bill at a hearing in August.

Identical legislation (S. 2061) has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Jon Tester (D-MT), Todd Young (R-IN), and Chris Murphy (D-CT). That bill was referred to the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee.

In addition to the Alliance, the bipartisan Peters-Tester legislation has been endorsed by the American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, AMVETS, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, Community Solutions, and National Housing Law Project.

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<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HUD-VASH-2019-v2-FINAL.pdf>

Actual Bills:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2398?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%222398%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=1>

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2061>

**Fighting Homelessness with Services and Housing Act**

* US Senate Bill: S.923
* US House Bill: H.R. 1978

According to Senator Feinstein’s statement, the Fighting Homelessness with Services and Housing Act (S.923) would authorize “a new federal funding grant program of $750 million per year, subject to annual appropriations.”

Grantees must serve individuals or families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless by providing housing paired with a comprehensive set of services, and they must provide a 25 percent match for any Federal funds received. Because each individual and every community is unique, the grant program created by this bill would be flexible in order to work in any region or for any homeless population.”

This bill would authorize the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to provide the grants. HRSA describes itself as “the primary federal agency for improving health care to people who are geographically isolated, economically or medically vulnerable.” As a HRSA program, these grants would be ideal for funding health care services and would also work to coordinate housing and services at both the individual and community levels.

HRSA already administers the federal Community Health Center program, including Health Care for the Homeless clinics around the country. These entities work closely with the Medicaid program, which provides health care funding for all eligible low-income people and would need to be a part of any successful effort to address homelessness among people with severe medical issues.

Currently, the Senate and House bills have been introduced and referred to committees: the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP), and the House Committee on Financial Services.

In addition to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, a number of other national organizations have endorsed the bill: Child Welfare League of America, Children’s Defense Fund, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Mayors and CEOs for U.S. Housing Investment, National Association of Counties, National Education Association, National League of Cities, National Low Income Housing Coalition, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice, and Treatment Communities of America.

NAEH Policy Brief

<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Feinstein-2019-FINAL.pdf>

CSH: <https://www.csh.org/2019/03/fighting-homelessness-through-services-and-housing/>

Actual Bills:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1978?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr+1978%22%5D%7D&s=2&r=1>

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/923>

**The Ending Homelessness Act of 2019**

* US House Bill: H.R. 1856

The Ending Homelessness Act of 2019 (H.R. 1856) would provide substantial additional funding for homelessness programs around the country outside of the regular annual appropriations process. The bill would add $2.65 billion in annual spending for new projects over a period of 5 years, with renewals of those projects potentially covered by different funding sources. The bill would also permanently authorize HUD’s McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants account, and permanently eliminate the sunset clause for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Annual funding for this bill would include:

* $1 billion for new homeless assistance projects, with 75 percent to be spent on permanent supportive housing, distributed to communities by formula, and renewed out of HUD’s regular CoC homeless assistance program competition (which would require additional appropriations each year).
* $500 million for new incremental Housing Choice Vouchers (also known as Section 8) for people who are homeless, distributed to communities according to need and renewed out of regular Housing Choice Voucher appropriations.
* $100 million for new outreach and service coordination grants, awarded competitively. Since these activities are eligible for HUD CoC funding, renewals could be done through the regular CoC competition, subject to additional appropriations.
* $1 billion in incremental funding for the National Housing Trust Fund to develop housing, with homeless people prioritized for the first five years.
* $50 million in incremental rental assistance funding to support National Housing Trust

An important aspect is that this bill’s funds would be provided through “mandatory” spending rather than through the “discretionary” funding handled by the Appropriations Committee. Using discretionary spending is one reason that HUD’s programs to house people with the lowest incomes have been inadequately funded for more than about three-quarters of eligible people. This bill can open a discussion about whether federal funding for housing should be provided to all eligible people through the mandatory spending process (as is the case with major federal programs providing food, medical care, and income for retirement).

The bill was introduced by Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) along with 46 original cosponsors. It passed the House Financial Services Committee on a partisan vote. There is no current schedule for a floor vote in the House. There is no corresponding Senate bill.

NAEH Policy Brief

<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Ending-Homelessness-Act-of-2019-H.R.-1856-v2.pdf>

National Low Income Housing Coalition Policy Brief: <https://nlihc.org/resource/house-financial-services-committee-approves-ending-homelessness-act>

Actual Bill: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/1856?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr1856%22%5D%7D&s=3&r=1>

**Keeping Families Together Act of 2019**

* US House Bill: H.R. 2763

The US Department of HUD has proposed a rule that if any member of a household is ineligible for assisted housing due to immigration status, the entire family would be ineligible. This proposition would change current rules that allow these families to live in assisted housing with the rent prorated so that the family pays the full rent for the ineligible members.  Bills in Congress have been introduced to prevent this proposed rule from taking effect.

Under current rules for HUD’s large housing programs such as Public Housing and Housing Choice Vouchers (“Section 8”), eligibility requires people who receive assistance to be U.S. citizens, or immigrants who are permanent residents (“green card”) or have immigration status that allows them to remain in the United States. A complete list of immigration categories that make a person eligible is available from the National Immigration Law Center. <https://www.nilc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/rental_housing_1005.pdf>

If a family includes members who are eligible and others who are not, the family is allowed to live in the housing, but the rent or subsidy amount is adjusted so that only the eligible members are subsidized, and the family pays full market rent for the ineligible members. Recent data show that approximately 108,000 people in assisted housing live in mixed status households; and that in these households about three quarters of the people are eligible, and one quarter are not and are paying full rent.

HUD’s proposed rule change would require all household members in assisted housing to be eligible, requiring mixed status families either to leave, or to expel the ineligible members. More detailed information is available on the [www.keep-families-together.org](http://www.keep-families-together.org) website.

HUD’s Homeless Assistance programs have different eligibility rules and would not be affected by this policy. However, permanent supportive housing for homeless people that is funded through Section 8, including HUD-Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH), would be affected.

Currently, HUD has published the proposed rule in the Federal Register and many public comments were submitted in opposition. HUD is presumably in the process of considering changes to the proposal before issuing a final rule. Meanwhile, two bills in Congress would prevent the rule from taking effect:

* HR 2763, the Keeping Families Together Act of 2019, is sponsored by Rep. Sylvia Garcia (D-TX) and currently has eight cosponsors. This bill passed the House Financial Services Committee on a partisan vote and awaits further action.
* The T-HUD Appropriations bill passed by the House Appropriations Committee includes a provision preventing this rule.

NAEH Policy Brief

<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Proposed-Rule-on-Mixed-Status-Immigration.pdf>

Actual Bill:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2763?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr2763%22%5D%7D&s=4&r=1>

**Ensuring Equal Access to Shelter Act of 2019**

* US House Bill: H.R. 3018

The Administration in considering changes to the 2016 Equal Access rule, which ensures that people may not be denied access to federally funded homeless shelters because of their gender identity. While specific proposed changes have not yet been issued, public documents raise concern that the rule change would allow federally funded homeless shelters either to deny services to transgender people, or to require that they use single-sex facilities according to a gender designation that is not their own.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness (Alliance) urges the Administration to maintain the Equal Access rule as-is, and supports Congressional efforts to retain it.

H.R 3018, a bill introduced by Representative Jennifer Wexton (D-VA) would prohibit HUD from implementing, “a proposed rule that would allow shelter providers to deny transgender and gender non-conforming people equal access to homeless shelters.”

The Committee approved the bill along partisan lines by a vote of 33-26. A vote on H.R. 3018 by the entire House of Representatives may occur later this year.

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<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/UPHOLD1.pdf>

Actual Bill:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3018?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr3018%22%5D%7D&s=5&r=1>

**Services for Ending Long Term Homelessness Act**

* US House Bill: HR 3272

This bill, introduced by Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL) with six original cosponsors, would create a grant program at the Department of Health and Human Services to fund permanent supportive housing, particularly health care and other supportive services; coordinate services; and create accountability within the federal government for bringing permanent supportive housing to scale.

The bill would require the HHS Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Abuse to work with other federal agencies to design national strategies for providing services in supportive housing that will assist in ending chronic homelessness, and to implement programs that address chronic homelessness. To promote an end to chronic homelessness, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) would award grants to serve people who have “physical or mental health conditions or substance use disorders and are chronically homeless or at risk of becoming chronically homeless;” and their families in permanent supportive housing, and provide health care and other supportive services, either directly or through coordination with other programs. The bill would establish performance outcomes for the program. The bill does not specify an amount of funding – that would be left up to the appropriations process.

The bill was introduced in June and has been referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee (which has jurisdiction over many health care issues). There has been no further action.

While different in terms of structure, this bill shares goals and objectives with S.923, The Fighting Homelessness Through Services and Housing Act, introduced by Senator Diane Feinstein in the Senate.

NAEH Policy Brief

<https://endhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Services-for-Ending-Long-Term-Homelessness-Act.pdf>

Actual Bill:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/3272?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr3272%22%5D%7D&s=6&r=1>