

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Ranking Member Bond:

We are writing to urge you to support increased funding for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program in the fiscal year 2010 THUD appropriations bill and make such funding a high priority in this year's bill. We ask that you include funding sufficient to renew existing vouchers as well as fund new vouchers in fiscal year 2010. While the difficulties in our nation's housing market and economy confront a broad range of American families, low-income families that live in rental housing continue to face the most significant challenges when trying to find safe and affordable housing, including the basic inability to access affordable housing. Increased funding for the Section 8 program will help meet the critical affordable rental housing needs of these families who face a heightened risk of homelessness and housing insecurity due to their inability to obtain affordable housing.

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program, originally created by the federal government in 1974, currently provides rental assistance to approximately two million households. Yet the current number of vouchers does not come close to meeting the demand that exists in communities around our country including urban, suburban, and rural areas. We have heard from advocates in our states about the increased need for additional funding for the tenant-based program – not only to fund existing vouchers in use, but to also fund new, incremental tenant-based vouchers for low-income families currently unable to be served by the program. Advocates in our states also continue to tell us about the increasing numbers of families on waiting lists for vouchers and unfortunately, these waiting lists will only grow longer if the Section 8 program does not receive increased funding.

Over the years, a number of different government agencies and advocacy organizations have cited the effectiveness of Section 8 in assisting low-income families in meeting some of their housing needs. Last month, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities released a paper documenting the increase in homelessness and poverty among low income Americans and noting that “housing vouchers are flexible, cost-effective, and successful in making rental housing affordable even for families with very low incomes, and numerous studies show that they can play a critical role in reducing homelessness among families with children.” In 2002, the Millennial Housing Commission reported to Congress that the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program is “flexible, cost-effective, and successful in its mission,” and that the vouchers “should continue to be the linchpin of a national policy providing very low-income renters access to the privately owned housing stock.” The Commission also called on Congress to provide a substantial investment in the tenant-based Section 8 program in the future.

In order to address the growing need for affordable rental housing, we urge you to include increased funding for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program in the fiscal year 2010 THUD appropriations bill that will not only fully fund existing vouchers, but also provide funding for new Section 8 vouchers in 2010. We look forward to working with you to not only boost funding for this valuable federal program that helps millions of American families secure affordable housing, but also promote responsible reforms to the Section 8 program that will allow the program to better serve the needs of American families for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration to our request. Your continued leadership on affordable housing issues is appreciated.

Sincerely,