

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October X, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer:

We write to highlight the urgent need for substantial affordable housing infrastructure investments as part of the broader Build Back Better Act. While congressional leaders continue to negotiate the size and scope of the economic recovery package, it is critical that any cuts made to the overall package do not come at the expense of affordable, accessible homes for America's lowest-income and most marginalized people.

Even before the pandemic, America was in the grips of an affordable housing crisis, most severely impacting the most marginalized and lowest-income people, including seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and others. Nationally, there is a shortage of 7 million homes affordable and available to renters with extremely low incomes. For every 10 of these households, there are fewer than 4 affordable and available homes. There is not a single state or congressional district with enough affordable homes to meet this demand.

Without affordable options, 8 million extremely low-income households pay at least half of their limited incomes on rent, leaving them without the resources they need to put food on the table, purchase needed medications, or make ends meet. Another half a million people experience homelessness on any given night. Despite the clear need, 3 in 4 households eligible for housing assistance receive none because Congress continues to underfund proven solutions. Families wait for years, even decades, on waiting lists.

The housing and homelessness crisis disproportionately harms Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, who – because of structural racism in housing and other sectors – are more likely to have extremely low-incomes, be severely cost-burdened, face eviction, and experience homelessness.

As this legislation advances in Congress, we urge you to ensure that funding levels for rental assistance, public housing and the Housing Trust Fund match the amounts included in the bill approved by the House Financial Services Committee on September 14:

- \$90 billion to expand rental assistance to 1 million additional households.
- \$80 billion to address the Public Housing repair backlog for 2.5 million residents.
- \$37 billion for the National Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve 330,000 homes affordable to people with the greatest needs.

Taken together, **these investments could effectively end homelessness in the United States.** Any cuts to funding for these priority programs means fewer people safely and affordably housed.

More than ever, we need your leadership to enact bold policies to ensure that people with the lowest incomes and the most marginalized people have a stable, affordable home. These housing investments should be prioritized to help ensure the Build Back Better Act delivers broad and equitable benefits to all Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ritchie Torres" followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress