



Housing Assistance Council

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www.ruralhome.org

October 13, 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 20510

The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chairwoman
Financial Services Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
Chairman
Banking Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Scott
Chairman
Agriculture Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
Agriculture Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Chairwoman Waters, Chairman Brown, Chairman Scott & Chairwoman Stabenow:

We hope this letter finds you and your families and staff well and healthy. The 118 undersigned affordable housing and community development organizations and partners write to support the rural housing resources included in the House Financial Services Committee's infrastructure reconciliation bill and the Rural Partnership Program included in the House Agriculture Committee's infrastructure reconciliation bill. We urge you to address the pressing housing and capacity needs of our nation's rural communities by maintaining these resources at the levels outlined in the Financial Services and Agriculture bills.

Long before the pandemic, rural America was facing an affordable and accessible housing crisis. Rural housing units lack adequate plumbing and kitchen facilities at a rate almost double the national average. Many homes in persistently poor rural areas suffer from overcrowding and a lack of accessibility. Affordability challenges also deeply impact rural residents, with average incomes well below the national median and nearly half of rural renters being categorized as cost burdened (paying 30 percent or more of their income in rent).¹ These rural communities also often struggle with a lack of access to capital, a dearth of philanthropic and government investment, and declining local capacity to provide assistance and access complex federal resources. Exacerbating these challenges, the rural housing programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have atrophied under federal funding cuts for decades.

¹ Based on data accessed at: <http://www.ruraldataportal.org/>

We specifically support the Financial Services provisions that invest \$5 billion in USDA rural housing programs for multifamily rental preservation and new construction, home ownership and home repair, farmworker housing and rental assistance; and \$25 million in the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP) at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to allow for affordable homeownership through sweat equity. No new USDA direct-financed rental housing has been developed in a decade (with the exception of a small number of farmworker housing units), and the existing properties are increasingly losing their affordability provisions as their mortgages mature, with thousands of units being lost each year.² The investment that the Financial Services reconciliation bill makes would be transformational for addressing the multifamily preservation crisis and encouraging rural homeownership.

We also support the Rural Partnership Program (RPP) in the House Agriculture reconciliation bill, to address the capacity needs of rural places. RPP is a newly proposed program that is funded at nearly \$4 billion and would provide flexible grants to support rural and tribal community development and capacity building. The proposed program has two parts: grants to support direct activities and projects, and grants to support the organizations responsible for providing technical assistance and capacity to administer the grants. The power of capacity building in rural communities cannot be overstated. Rural communities often have small and part-time local governments, inadequate philanthropic support and a shortage of the specialists needed to navigate the complexities of federal programs and modern housing finance. Targeted capacity building through training and technical assistance is how local organizations learn skills, tap information, and gain the wherewithal to do what they know needs to be done. Geographic equity for rural places is a stated priority for the new Administration,³ but no amount of federal investment will succeed in creating lasting rural equity if not paired with robust capacity building to ensure the most underserved and persistently poor rural places are in a position to access available federal resources.

We urge you to consider the unique infrastructure needs of rural places and maintain the targeted resources for rural housing and capacity building included in the House Financial Services and Agriculture reconciliation bills. We stand ready to work with you during these unprecedented times to achieve these objectives. Thank you for your time and leadership.

Sincerely,

Housing Assistance Council (HAC)

Alabama Rural Ministry
Alaska Community Development Corporation
AllCare Community Foundation
Allendale County ALIVE
Appalachian Community Capital

² Rental Housing for a 21st Century Rural America: A Platform for Preservation. Housing Assistance Council. <https://ruralhome.org/rural-america-is-losing-its-affordable-rental-housing/>

³ Executive Order On Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. Jan. 20, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

Beattyville Housing and Development Corporation, Inc.
Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation
Campesinos Sin Fronteras
CASA of Oregon
cdcb | come dream. come build.
Center for Community Progress
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Rural Strategies
Central City Realty, Inc.
City of Cripple Creek
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
Colorado Mountain Land Office
Communities Unlimited, Inc.
Community Action Commission of Fayette County
Community Concepts, Inc.
Community Frameworks
Companera and Associates
Council for Affordable and Rural Housing
Cowlitz County Habitat for Humanity
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
Curry County Homeless Coalition
Damascus Outreach Association, Inc.
Dance With Todd, Inc.
Diverse Housing Services, Inc.
Divine Ones Outreach Program
Enterprise Community Partners
Fahe
Family Resources of New Orleans
Fauquier Habitat for Humanity
Flint Hills Regional Council
Florida Non Profit Housing, Inc.
Frontier Housing, Inc.
Gary E. Hanes And Associates, LLC
Georgia Advancing Communities Together
Great Lakes Community Action Partnership
Greenpath Technologies
Greystone Affordable Development
Grow South Dakota
Habitat for Humanity Northeast Michigan
Habitat for Humanity of the San Juans
Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin River Area
Higher Purpose Co.
Highlands Housing Corporation
Homeless and Housing Coalition of Kentucky
Hope Policy Institute
Housing America Corporation
Housing Lopez
Hudson River Housing
Impact Educational and Housing Development

Jefferson County Habitat for Humanity
Kentucky Mountain Housing Dev. Corp. Inc.
Kiemle Hagood
Lakeway Area Habitat for Humanity
Liberty Restoration Community Development Center
Lumbee Regional Development Association
Mental Health Association Oklahoma
Merritt Community Complex Foundation
Minnesota Housing Partnership
MO/EN Design Practice LLC
Mountain T.O.P.
National Affordable Housing Management Association
National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA)
National Association of Development Organizations
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Trust
National NeighborWorks Association
NC Rural Center
NCALL Research
Neighborhood Housing Services of Dimmit County, Inc.
NeighborWorks Capital
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
New Foundations Development, Inc.
Noah Arc Community Development Corp, Inc.
Northwest Regional Housing Authority
Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing
OPAL Community Land Trust
Partners for Rural Transformation
Partners for Rural Washington
Paulhus and Associates
People's Self-Help Housing, Inc.
Piedmont Habitat for Humanity, Inc.
Pike School of Art – Mississippi
RBG
RCAP Solutions, Inc.
Rebuilding Together Kent County
Reinventing Rural
Restoring Gods Glory Ministries, Inc.
Ruben D Salazar, Inc.
Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)
Rural Development Initiatives
Rural Housing Opportunities Corp.
Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Self-Help Enterprises
Self-Help Homes
Self-Help Housing Corporation of Hawaii
Servants, Inc.
Sierra Service Project

South Texas Collaborative for Housing Development
Southwest GA United Empowerment Zone
Tangi Community Development
Tennessee's Community Assistance Corporation (TCAC)
The Genesis Fund
The Housing Assistance Corporation
The Pescadero Foundation
Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation
Timberhill Enterprises, LLC
Town of Fries, Virginia
Tri County Community Action Agency, Inc.
Wisconsin Council For Affordable and Rural Housing
Woodlands Development Group