

October 15, 2021

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

We write to you on a matter of critical importance regarding the future fate of our nation's public housing system. As Congressional leaders consider potential changes to President Biden's *Build Back Better Act*, we urge you not to cut the *Act's* investment in the Department of Housing and Urban Development's ("HUD") Public Housing Capital Fund.

Last month, under the leadership of Chairwoman Maxine Waters, the House Financial Services Committee provided more than \$300 billion in funding for new and existing federal housing programs.¹ While many of us voted for the Financial Services Committee's Print and continue to support the overwhelming majority of the investments, of preeminent importance to us is the Committee's investment in the Public Housing Capital Fund. The Committee's Print invests \$80 billion in HUD's Public Housing Capital Fund.² **We urge you to maintain this level of funding in any finalized text that passes the House of Representatives.**

Our nation's public housing system is in a state of crisis. With the exception of an infusion of funding from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (Pub. Law. 111-5) in 2009, federal capital funding has remained relatively level for more than a decade, despite an increasing backlog in unmet capital needs. Today, there are approximately 1.1 million units of public housing across the country receiving federal funding.³ The nation's largest public housing authority, the New York City Public Housing Authority ("NYCHA"), houses approximately 400,000 residents in 285 developments across New York City.⁴ And the Public Housing Capital Fund remains the primary

¹ Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to the Committee Print - Providing for reconciliation pursuant to S. Con. Res. 14, the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2022. (Monday, September 13, 2021). <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hmkp-117-ba00-20210913-sd004.pdf> (Last Accessed: October 14, 2021).

² Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to the Committee Print - Providing for reconciliation pursuant to S. Con. Res. 14, the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2022. Section. 40001. (Monday, September 13, 2021). <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hmkp-117-ba00-20210913-sd004.pdf>

³ Council of Large Public Housing Authorities. *Public Housing Facts*. <https://clpha.org/public-housing/facts> (Last Accessed: October 14, 2021).

⁴ "NYCHA 2021 Fact Sheet." *NYCHA 2021 Fact Sheet*, New York City Housing Authority, Mar. 2021, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/NYCHA-Fact-Sheet_2021.pdf. (Last Accessed: October 14, 2021).

source of funding these housing authorities rely on to address necessary infrastructure upgrades and make repairs.

Federal disinvestment in public housing has forced many residents to live in accelerating substandard living. For example, NYCHA has a capital repair backlog currently estimated at more than \$40 billion.⁵ Residents suffer from a consistent lack of hot water, insufficient heat during the winter months, rodent and insect infestations, broken elevators, and widespread and recurring lead and mold problems. Substandard housing conditions, such as poor ventilation, pest infestations, and water leaks, are directly associated with the development and exacerbation of respiratory diseases like asthma.

Moreover, the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a new level of risk into our society. Poor housing conditions have been linked with worse health outcomes and infectious disease spread. One leading study found that counties with a higher percentage of households with poor housing had a higher incidence of, and mortality associated with, COVID-19 and recommended targeted health policies to support individuals living in poor housing conditions in order to mitigate adverse outcomes associated with COVID-19.⁶

The state of our nation's public housing system has become a public health crisis, but it is a fixable public health crisis. The \$80 billion invested by the Financial Services Committee is enough funding to eliminate the public housing capital backlog for all public housing authorities nationwide. Housing is infrastructure. A once in a generation investment in our nation's housing infrastructure must therefore address all the repair needs of our nation's public housing system.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely Yours,

_____/s/_____
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

⁵ "NYCHA Transformation Plan Final." *NYCHA's Blueprint for Change: Transformation Plan*, New York City Housing Authority, Mar. 2, 2021, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nycha/downloads/pdf/NYCHA_Transformation_Plan_Final.pdf. (Last accessed: October 14, 2021).

⁶ Ahmad K, Erqou S, Shah N, Nazir U, MorrisonAR, ChoudharyG, et al. "Association of poor housing conditions with COVID-19 incidence and mortality across US counties". *PLoS ONE* 15(11): e0241327. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0241327>.

_____/s/_____
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jerrold L. Nadler
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Jamaal Bowman Ed.D.
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Grace Meng
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

cc:

Representative Maxine Waters (CA-43), Chair, Financial Services Committee, United States House of Representatives