

Issue Brief:

HOMELESSNESS & COVID-19



CHACE

Campaign for Housing and
Civic Engagement

•••• *Stable homes build strong communities.* ••••

Supporting Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness and at Risk for Experiencing Homelessness During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already existing housing crisis and has highlighted the connection between housing and health, particularly as it relates to the experience of homelessness. It is very difficult to maintain one's health without having a safe and stable place to call home. Access to hygiene products and facilities and the ability to social distance, privileges awarded to those with homes, are essential for staying healthy and/or recovering.

The Need

We Need Action Now!

An analysis by Columbia University Economics professor, Dr. Brendan O'Flaherty, anticipates an up to

45% increase in homelessness by the end of 2020 as a result of job losses from Coronavirus.¹

This translates to an increase of about **250,000 people**, a startling number based on a standard regression analysis of unemployment projections and current homelessness data.

While we appreciated the \$4B Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program funding that Congress approved through the CARES Act to keep homeless individuals and families safe and healthy during the pandemic, more needs to be done. Continued funding will be needed for the immediate term as well as long term solutions to eliminate the experience of homelessness altogether.

What's Been Done

Families and individuals experiencing homelessness need homes; not just temporary shelter. During the pandemic, ESG funding along with funding through FEMA enabled localities throughout the country to use those dollars to expand shelter capacity and social distancing measures within shelters, provide access to hygiene resources and testing, and move individuals experiencing homelessness from temporary hotel/shelter situations into homes through the Rapid Rehousing Program.

What Congress Can Do

Research found that \$15.5B would be needed this year for shelters to practice social distancing and address the needs of the current and projected homeless population, as well as to rapidly rehouse individuals experiencing homelessness.^{2,3}

Below are immediate steps Congress could take to help slow the spread of Coronavirus and safely shelter and house our neighbors who are homeless.

Allocate additional CDBG funds to build and maintain homes that are affordable.

Allocate additional ESG funds to continue to house individuals experiencing homelessness through the Rapid Rehousing program. Rapid Rehousing provides short term housing and services to those experiencing homelessness, with the goal of moving those individuals into permanent and stable housing.⁴

¹, "Analysis on Unemployment Projects 40-45% Increase in Homelessness this Year", Community Solutions. May 2020.

². Dennis Culhane, Daniel Treglia, Ken Steif, Randall Kuhn, and Thomas Byrne, "Estimated Emergency and Observational/Quarantine Bed Need for the US Homeless Population Related to COVID-19 Exposure by County; Projected Hospitalizations, Intensive Care Units and Mortality." March 2020.

³ National Low Income Housing Coalition and National Alliance to End Homelessness, "New Data on Coronavirus and Homelessness", https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NLIHC-NAEH_15-5B_ESG_Request.pdf. 2020

⁴ National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Rapid Rehousing", https://endhomelessness.org/ending-homelessness/solutions/rapid-re-housing/?emailsignature&gclid=CjwKCAjwqpP2BRBTEiwAfpID-8mhkff47LAVgsSjbChGuhjbPPrsT7KG67qpoCvHZFzLy009EWwBbhoCcFQQA_vD_BwE.