

June 23, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

As a collection of housing and homelessness experts and elected officials representing New York State, we are deeply appreciative of your efforts throughout the last year to provide emergency relief for struggling tenants and for your continued support for policies that would boost the overall supply of affordable housing in New York and beyond. To take those efforts to the next level, we urge you to capitalize on a historic opportunity to address the root of a long-standing and worsening housing crisis impacting every American – but especially those in your respective constituencies.

The current debate over a sweeping infrastructure investment package is the ideal environment to push for transformative housing policies that may have been considered impossible even just several months ago. As you well know, housing *is* both physical and social infrastructure, benefitting the families who are securely housed, as the communities in which it is built, and the economy through job and revenue creation. We write to encourage you to make bold change and a lasting impact by: 1) Establishing a housing safety net by providing Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to all eligible households; 2) Preserving public housing; and 3) Expanding affordable housing supply.

Establish a Housing Safety Net

COVID-19 created a dual public health and economic crisis that exacerbated the already staggering housing needs of New Yorkers. In New York, over 90,000 people experience homeless and over 143,000 public school children live in unstable housing. Almost 2.7 million New Yorkers live in poverty and almost 1 million low-income households pay more than half their income on rent, but current federal rental assistance programs do not reach many in need: 75 percent of eligible households do not receive any assistance. By expanding the rental assistance program to include all eligible households, you would immediately reduce the nation's poverty rate by 25 percent – a historic achievement that would materially benefit millions of lives.

With President Biden promising this change on the campaign trail, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to establish a real housing safety net for families and individuals across the country. As such, we urge you to fight for Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to be moved to the mandatory side of the budget and fully funded to serve all eligible households.

Preserve Public Housing

Public housing is a vital part of our nation's infrastructure. More than 400,000 individuals live in public housing in New York alone, with the overwhelming majority served by the largest housing authority in the county, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). Unfortunately, NYCHA alone has an immediate capital need of \$40 billion as a result of decades of federal neglect. Until that gap is closed, hundreds of thousands of residents will continue to experience substandard living conditions that threaten their physical and economic well-being. In order to address the public housing crisis, the final infrastructure package should include at least \$80 billion in capital for public housing needs.

Expand Affordable Housing Supply

New York, like the rest of the country, has a severe shortage of affordable housing that lies at the root of the housing crisis: the state is almost 650,000 units short for very low- and extremely low-income renters. Existing barriers to expanding supply make it more difficult to close this gap, even after recent changes to the 4 percent Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. While the LIHTC has been an effective tool and economic driver, serving over 500,000 low-income households, supporting 350,000 jobs annually and generating billions in wages and revenue in New York alone, more can be done to improve its efficiency.

We are calling for provisions to strengthen and expand LIHTC including a 50 percent increase to housing credit allocations and a lowering of the 50 percent threshold of private activity bond financing required for the 4 percent housing credit. HUD-assisted housing should be exempt from counting towards a state's bond volume cap, which would significantly increase private investment in federally- assisted housing and ensure preservation for the next generation. Further, we are calling for an expansion of the National Housing Trust Fund (HTF) to \$45 billion annually — \$26 billion of which would be dedicated to supportive housing for those experiencing homelessness and have the greatest barriers to achieving housing stability. This would ensure deep affordability for the lowest income households where the need is most urgent. Combined with establishing a housing safety net, expanding affordable housing supply would allow New York to transform homelessness from an ever growing crisis to something that is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

As we move from crisis to recovery, now is the time to invest in affordable housing. With historically low interest rates, federal funding will leverage significant private investment. It will also provide an opportunity to take advantage of a changing real estate market. With distressed commercial real estate including hotels and underutilized offices, federal resources can help facilitate affordable housing conversions at scale.

We are grateful to have a Congress that understands the importance of affordable housing. As leaders of the House and Senate, it is in your power to take action and ensure this historic investment has the greatest impact. Together, the following organizations and elected officials call on you to act with urgency to include critical funding for affordable housing that serves all those who need it.

We would welcome a meeting with you or your respective staffs to go over any of these issues in more detail, and we look forward to building a more affordable country alongside you.

Sincerely,



Rachel Fee
Executive Director
New York Housing Conference

In partnership with the following 31 New York State Senators, 34 New York State Assembly Members, 2 New York City Borough Presidents, 11 New York City Council Members, 6 New York City Mayoral candidates and 97 organizations:

Elected Officials:

NYS Senator Joseph Addabbo
NYS Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
NYS Senator Jamal Bailey
NYS Senator Alessandra Biaggi
NYS Senator Samra Brouk
NYS Senator Leroy Comrie
NYS Senator Jeremy Cooney
NYS Senator Mike Gianaris
NYS Senator Andrew Gounardes
NYS Senator Pete Harckham
NYS Senator Michelle Hinchey
NYS Senator Brad Hoylman
NYS Senator Robert Jackson
NYS Senator Anna Kaplan
NYS Senator Brian Kavanaugh
NYS Senator Liz Krueger
NYS Senator John Liu
NYS Senator John Mannion
NYS Senator Rachel May
NYS Senator Shelley Mayer
NYS Senator Roxanne Persaud
NYS Senator Jessica Ramos
NYS Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick
NYS Senator Gustavo Rivera
NYS Senator Sean Ryan
NYS Senator Julia Salazar

NYS Senator James Sanders
NYS Senator Diane Savino
NYS Senator Luis Sepúlveda
NYS Senator James Skoufis
NYS Senator Kevin Thomas

NYS Assembly Member Brian Barnwell
NYS Assembly Member Didi Barrett
NYS Assembly Member Charles Barron
NYS Assembly Member Chris Burdick
NYS Assembly Member Robert Carroll
NYS Assembly Member Sarah Clark
NYS Assembly Member Catalina Cruz
NYS Assembly Member Steven Cymbrowitz
NYS Assembly Member Taylor Darling
NYS Assembly Member Maritza Davila
NYS Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz
NYS Assembly Member Steve Englebright
NYS Assembly Member Harvey Epstein
NYS Assembly Member Patricia Fahy
NYS Assembly Member Mathylde Frontus
NYS Assembly Member Sandy Galef
NYS Assembly Member Emily Gallagher
NYS Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas
NYS Assembly Member Richard Gottfried
NYS Assembly Member Judy Griffin
NYS Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi
NYS Assembly Member Pamela Hunter
NYS Assembly Member Anna Kelles
NYS Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani
NYS Assembly Member John McDonald
NYS Assembly Member Steven Otis
NYS Assembly Member Amy Paulin
NYS Assembly Member Karines Reyes
NYS Assembly Member Robert Rodriguez
NYS Assembly Member Daniel Rosenthal
NYS Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal
NYS Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright
NYS Assembly Member Amanda Septimo
NYS Assembly Member Latrice Walker

Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
Queens Borough President Donovan Richards

NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson
NY City Council Member Margaret Chin
NY City Council Member Robert Cornegy
NY City Council Member Karen Koslowitz
NY City Council Member Brad Lander
NY City Council Member Mark Levine
NY City Council Member Carlos Menchaca
NY City Council Member Bill Perkins
NY City Council Member Carlina Rivera
NY City Council Member Helen Rosenthal
NY City Council Member Rafael Salamanca

Mayoral Candidates:

Eric Adams
Shaun Donovan
Kathryn Garcia
Ray McGuire
Maya Wiley
Andrew Yang

Organizations:

New York Housing Conference
A. Larovere Consulting and Development
The Arker Companies
Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)
Bowery Residents' Committee (BRC)
Breaking Ground
CAMBA
Catholic Charities POP Development
Center for Urban Community Services
Chinatown BID/Partnership
Citizens Action of New York
Citizens Committee for Children
Citizens Housing and Planning Council
Citywide Council of Presidents NYCHA
Coalition for the Homeless
Coalition for Homeless Youth
Community League of the Heights Inc. (CLOTH)
Community Preservation Corporation (CPC)
Community Service Society of New York
Concern for Independent Living
CREA, LLC
CSH
CUCS

Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
Designing the We
Douglaston Development
Enterprise Community Partners
ERASE Racism
Fifth Avenue Committee
The Fortune Society
FPWA
Gateway Housing
Geto & de Milly, Inc.
GF55 Architects
Goddard Riverside
Good Old Lower East Side – GOLES
HANAC
HELP USA
The Health & Housing Consortium
Homeless Services United
Hope Community, Inc.
Housing Rights Initiative
The Hudson Companies
IMPACCT Brooklyn
Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing
JRW Strategies
Kinetic Communities Consulting
Lappin Associates
The Legal Aid Society
LiveOn NY
LISC NYC
LISC NYS Housing Stabilization Fund
Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)
MBD Community Housing Corp.
Mega Contracting
Met Council on Housing
MHANY Management Inc.
Monadnock Development
Neighborhood Restore HDfC
Neighbors Helping Neighbors
New Destiny Housing
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
NYC Housing Partnership
NYS Rural Advocates
New York State Council of Churches
NYSFAFH
NYS PHADA

OAR of Tompkins County
Omni New York LLC
Open Hearts Initiative
Open New York
The Osborne Association
Phipps Houses
Project Hospitality
Radson Development
RDC Development
Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY)
Regional Plan Association (RPA)
RiseBoro Community Partnership
Robin Hood Foundation
Rockabill
RxHome NYC
The Samuels Group
Selfhelp Realty Group (SRG) – The Melamid Institute for Affordable Housing
Settlement Housing Fund, Inc.
Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation
SKA Marin
Southside United HDFC – Los Sures
St. Mary's Park Houses Resident Council
St. Nicks Alliance
Supportive Housing Network of New York
Tenants Political Action Committee
Two Trees Management
UNHP
United Neighborhood Houses
Wavecrest Management
Win