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AN OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND INSURANCE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

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CONTENTS

	Page
Hearing held on:	
May 17, 2018	1
Appendix:	
May 17, 2018	35

WITNESSES

THURSDAY, MAY 17, 2018

Bischoff, Ann, Executive Director, Star House	11
Bremer, Duana, Social Service Director, Polk, Burnett, and St. Croix Counties, The Salvation Army	7
Lynn, Peter, Executive Director, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority	9
Roman, Nan, President, National Alliance to End Homelessness	5

APPENDIX

Prepared statements:	
Bischoff, Ann	36
Bremer, Duana	44
Lynn, Peter	49
Roman, Nan	53

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Duffy, Hon. Sean:	
Written statement from Huckleberry House	62

AN OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

Thursday, May 17, 2018

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND INSURANCE,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room 2128, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Sean P. Duffy [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Duffy, Ross, Royce, Luetkemeyer, Stivers, Hultgren, Rothfus, Zeldin, Hensarling, Cleaver, Velazquez, Sherman, Kihuen, Gonzalez, and Waters.

Also present: Representative Green.

Chairman DUFFY. The Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance will come to order.

Today's hearing is entitled, "An Overview of Homelessness in America."

Without objection, the Chair is authorized to declare a recess of the subcommittee at any time.

Without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit extraneous materials to the Chair for inclusion in the record.

Without objection, members of the full committee who are not members of this subcommittee may participate in today's hearing for the purpose of making an opening statement and questioning witnesses.

The Chair now recognizes himself for a 5-minute opening statement.

I first want to thank our witnesses for participating in today's hearing as we take a look at homelessness in America. We also need to review the effectiveness and efficiency of our Federal programs in order to determine if we are getting the biggest bang for our taxpayer dollar.

We have already had an opportunity to discuss the number of ways HUD (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) helps the poorest among us climb out of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency, whether through the FSS program, housing choice vouchers, or rental assistance.

Each year, I host a homelessness and hunger summit in my district. This year, I was honored to be joined by the HUD Secretary, Ben Carson, at our event, where we had over 400 people in attend-

ance. Maybe the HUD Secretary brings a few more people out. That was nice.

But during the summit, we learned that, time and again, homelessness in rural areas looks a lot different than homelessness in urban areas. But I would just note that it has the same impact on individuals and on families all the same.

I am sure you will understand my focus on Wisconsin, and I want to quote something from Ms. Bremer's testimony that highlights the distinction between homelessness in rural areas versus urban areas.

Now, before I read her quote, I would just note that PIT in HUD-speak is point in time and refers to how many people are counted as homeless in an area on a specific day. So to quote Ms. Bremer: "Comparing January 2016 PIT to the January 2017 total, there was an overall 12 percent decrease in the number of people experiencing homelessness on that one night in Wisconsin. However, there was an 8 percent increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in our rural communities," end quote.

So we have Statewide homelessness in Wisconsin going down by 12 percent, but rural homelessness actually increasing, which is a significant problem.

Now, I like Madison and Milwaukee as much as any other Wisconsinite, but we need to make sure that HUD's resources aren't just primarily focused on metropolitan areas. That means addressing some of the funding disparities between rural and urban populations.

The 2010 Census Bureau's Consolidated Federal Funds Report stated that of all Federal Government assistance provided per capita, folks in rural communities receive almost $700 less per year than in urban communities. That is a lot of money, especially for our smaller providers who are helping the homeless.

We can start by looking at the Federal definition of homelessness to be more inclusive and recognize the reality that the homeless population in rural areas face different challenges than the homeless in larger, more metropolitan areas.

Our homeless in rural Wisconsin, we don't have bridges that the homeless sleep under or large centers providing shelter. Our local communities don't get funding proportionate to that of larger cities.

The homeless in my district hope that they have a friend that will put them up for a night on their couch or they live out of their cars. This might shock some of you, but some of my constituents actually will sleep in the woods when they don't have a place to stay. We don't even have sidewalks in some of our rural communities. This is rural stuff.

So let me close by saying this: As it turns out, folks aren't happy when they are relying on the Government. People are happy when they are in the community, in the workforce contributing to society, and at the end of the day, they have a bit of cash left over maybe to spend on themselves or their families. And so I want to make sure that our programs achieve those goals.

To quote Secretary Carson, quote, "We should measure the success of a program not on the number of people we add to it, but the number of people we get off of it," end quote.

And so I just—today's hearing, I know that Ms. Waters is going to testify. And I know that in California, in L.A., there is a serious homelessness problem that is ravaging her community.

And so I don't, in my comments, want to undermine the problems that we have across the country, but I do think it is a point in time where we can talk about the disparity of rural America and how homelessness affects our people in a different way and how the funding resources don't flow to rural America, though the impact on a family and an individual are just as catastrophic.

So, again, I want to thank our panelists for being here today. I look forward to your insight and your feedback.

With that, I now recognize the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Cleaver, for 2 minutes.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for this hearing. I associate myself with the facts that you just presented.

In Missouri, 5 out of every 10,000 people are homeless. And one of the great tragedies is that many Vietnam veterans live along the Missouri River, and that is quite a jump. Usually we will have this annual standdown where we try to bring as many of them into the city for haircuts and dental checks and so forth.

But they live along the Missouri River, and that is significant when you consider this is the third longest river system in the world. The Missouri connects up with the Mississippi and—just outside of Kansas City headed toward St. Louis, and they are living all along the river part. And a significant number of them live outside of a place called Slater—that you have never heard of—and maybe you have heard of Marshall. It is 12,000 people.

So we have a very serious problem. It is being addressed by some great agencies, City Union Mission in Kansas City, ReStore in Kansas City. But when you get into the rural areas, there are very, very few, if any, homeless shelters. Now, we can say what we want about people who are homeless, but for many of them, they are people with some severe issues, some of them mental.

One of the most painful days for my twin sons was when the local newspaper reported that Willie Mays Aikens was living under a bridge in Kansas City. Willie Mays Aikens for 5 years was the leading homerun hitter for the Kansas City Royals, and he ended up living under a bridge. And there are a million stories like that all along the Missouri River.

So thank you for calling this hearing, Mr. Chairman, and hopefully we will get some answers to give us help. Thank you.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the full committee, the gentlelady from California, Ms. Waters, for 3 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to say a thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I am very pleased that we are having this hearing. Some of us have been calling on this committee to turn its attention to homelessness for more than 5 years. And, of course, this will be the first hearing that this committee has focused on on homelessness during our Chairman's tenure, and I certainly hope it will not be the last.

In fact, I would like to remind the Chairman of my request to hold a field hearing in Los Angeles to hear from local stakeholders about the recent increase in homelessness in that area. Los Angeles is ground zero for homelessness, and that is why I am pleased that Peter Lynn is here today to tell us about the unique experience of Los Angeles and unique challenges and solutions that they are facing in fighting this problem.

Today, there are over .5 million people experiencing homelessness here in the richest country in the world, over one-fifth of whom are children. These are veterans we failed to support when they returned home after serving our country, these are women fleeing domestic violence, these are people who have left prison after serving their debt to society, and these are people who have simply fallen on hard times.

Mr. Chairman, we know exactly how to end a person's homelessness: You provide her with a home. That is why I introduced H.R. 2076, a $13.2 billion bill, the Ending Homelessness Act, which provides a surge of new resources and a comprehensive plan to tackle this solvable problem. The end of homelessness in this country is within our reach if we can just muster the political courage to provide the necessary resources.

And to the—Mr. Duffy, let me just say this: I don't think there is any division, any problems talking about homelessness both in rural and urban areas. Everybody wants to do something about this. And I can tell you that I support dealing with and supplying the resources for homelessness in the rural community just as I support it in the urban community. So I am anxious that we can get along with doing something about homelessness.

And I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentlelady yields back. And I look forward to working with her on this very important issue. I think I have actually suggested coming to California and letting her come to rural Wisconsin. It would be a fun trip together. But that is for a different conversation.

She said she is going to go to Los Angeles, not to Wisconsin, I would note.

I want to welcome our witnesses today. Thank you for being here. First, I want to recognize our first witness, Ms. Nan Roman, the President of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, also one who has participated in my homelessness and hunger summits in Wisconsin. I appreciate that.

Our second witness is Duana Bremer, the Social Service Director for Polk, Burnett, and St. Croix Counties at the Salvation Army—counties that belong to the Seventh District of the great State of Wisconsin. From personal experience, I just know how hard she works and the success she has had helping the poorest among us work through her programs and transition into a life of sustainability. And she has also been part of our homelessness and hunger summits, and I thank her for being here today as well.

Our third witness is Mr. Peter Lynn, executive director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Welcome.

And for the introduction of Ms. Bischoff, I want to look to the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Stivers, for her introduction.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you for calling this hearing and your impactful opening statement.

I am honored to introduce Ann Bischoff, the CEO of the Star House. It is a 24-hour center that provides services for homeless youth in central Ohio. I have had the opportunity to visit Star House and witness firsthand how impactful their work is on the vulnerable youth population that they serve and is committed to serving her fellow man.

And I want to welcome her to the Housing and Insurance Subcommittee, the Financial Services Committee, and thank you for allowing me to introduce her.

Thanks for being here, Ann, and we are looking forward to hearing your very important testimony on how this impacts youth because the statutory definition also leaves them out.

So thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman DUFFY. Thank you, Mr. Stivers.

The witnesses will now be, in a moment, recognized for 5 minutes to give an oral presentation of their written testimony.

Without objection, the witness' written statements will be made part of the record following their oral remarks. Once the witnesses have finished presenting their testimony, each member of the subcommittee will have 5 minutes within which to ask the panel questions.

I would just note that on your table there are three lights: Green means go, yellow means you have 1 minute left, and red means that your time is up. Pretty self-explanatory. The microphones are sensitive, so please make sure you are speaking directly into them.

With that, Ms. Roman, you are now recognized for 5 minutes for an oral presentation of your written testimony.

Ms. ROMAN. Well, thank you so much. Chairman Duffy—

Chairman DUFFY. Microphone. Is it on?

Ms. ROMAN. Yes?

Chairman DUFFY. There we go.

Ms. ROMAN. Better.

STATEMENT OF NAN ROMAN

Ms. ROMAN. Chairman Duffy, Ranking Member Cleaver, and members of the subcommittee and the committee, thank you so much for inviting the National Alliance to End Homelessness to testify at this important hearing.

I know personally of the tremendous commitment of Chairman Duffy and Ranking Members Cleaver and Waters, Congressman Royce, and many other members of the subcommittee to helping to end homelessness. And we are deeply grateful for your leadership.

I am pleased to report to you that although not—homelessness didn't go down in every community, from 2007 to 2016, homelessness did decline in the Nation across all measured populations. And this has happened despite the headwinds of increasing rents and declining incomes for poor people. It happened because of Federal support, notably from the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs, and because of the effective work of local leaders like those who join me here today on the panel.

Progress has been made, but there is a long way to go. Over 550,000 people are homeless every night. This is unnecessary be-

cause we know how to end homelessness, and achieving that goal is well within our ability as a Nation.

People become homeless when they lose housing, and people who have a home are not homeless. It is definitional. You here on the subcommittee do not control every Federal resource that might be able to help people end their homelessness, but you do control housing resources and the homeless programs.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's homeless assistance programs have been effective and successful. They are effective because they know what they can do and what they cannot do. They can help people resolve a housing crisis and end their homelessness; they cannot solve every problem that people have or end their poverty on their own, their first step.

They are effective because they focus on housing. They are effective because they collect and use data. And they are effective because, as HUD learns from the field about what works best, it continually adjusts the programs to support those solutions and maintains a firm focus on outcomes. As a taxpayer, I would say that is how I want a Federal program to run.

The programs are effective, but there are always things that could be improved. The programs have become more complex, and there may be ways in which they could be streamlined. It must be said, though, that a lot of the complexity has to do with stretching an inadequate resource to try to meet urgent needs.

While homelessness has declined more rapidly in rural than urban areas overall—sorry that is not the case in Wisconsin—the programs could do a better job of helping rural areas take advantage of their smaller homeless numbers.

The subcommittee might consider allowing rural communities to provide short-term emergency lodging assistance, incentive payments to host households, and encouragement to counties to combine homeless and mainstream funding.

Also to use a definition that is more flexible with respect to the things you discussed, in terms of the people that have no shelters, it is hard to identify homeless people, people as being homeless.

People who are homeless must have housing, but they also have service needs. HUD needs to partner with other Federal agencies in terms of the Federal responsibilities for that, and that is where the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) comes in. It helps Federal agencies and State and local entities to coordinate.

The impact of USICH's work can be seen in the positive homelessness outcomes. The Alliance wholeheartedly supports the work of USICH in its continuing authorization, which could be accomplished through H.R. 5393, the Working Together to End Homelessness Act.

While there are always things to improve, it makes sense not to change things that are working well. Using permanent supportive housing to end chronic homelessness has cut that population in half. HUD could be more aggressive in targeting turnover vouchers to move on initiatives that would free up more of the supply of that for higher need people.

Rapid rehousing has significantly contributed to the reduction in family homelessness. This intervention should be expanded, especially for use by individuals. HUD's investment in new youth pro-

grams fills an unmet need. It will be important as the demonstrations begin to be implemented to monitor their outcomes and see what works.

There needs to be an articulation of solutions to homelessness among individuals. The largest subpopulation—this is the largest subpopulation, but it has been the least attended to by communities and by HUD, which is possibly the reason that unsheltered homelessness has gone up.

These are some of the things to continue in next steps. But, again, it is the Alliance's view that with a strong leadership and support of Congress and the Administration and with a strict focus on outcomes, the McKinney-Vento programs are doing an excellent job.

Two very important things, however, remain to be said. At least a third of people who are homeless are unsheltered, nearly 200,000 people a night. That means they have no roof over their head at all. That is just not acceptable.

HUD is doing the best it can. It and all its grantees are wringing every possible ounce out of every dollar they get from you and leverage from others. We know what to do to get people back into housing, but we just don't have the money to do it for those people who are unsheltered.

Further, more people are going to become homeless, and the effectiveness of our homeless efforts are going to diminish if the trajectory doesn't change on affordable housing. That problem is just getting worse. Lower income families and individuals are paying more and more of their inadequate incomes for rent, and they are being placed at risk of homelessness. Not addressing that crisis will stop our progress on ending homelessness and have enormous economic, social, and human costs to our Nation.

Once again, I thank you so much for having this hearing and for inviting the Alliance to be here.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Roman can be found on page 53 of the Appendix.]

Chairman DUFFY. Thank you, Ms. Roman.

Ms. Bremer, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF DUANA BREMER

Ms. BREMER. Again, I would like to thank Chairman Duffy, the Ranking Member Cleaver, and the rest of the committee for allowing us to be here today to address this very important issue. Salvation Army is very grateful to be part of this conversation to help homeless families seek permanent housing.

Homelessness is often framed as an urban policy issue—however, families, service providers, and communities. This situation has received little notice from media or research attention because it is mostly focused on the highly visible problem of urban homelessness. There are over 554,000 homeless individuals residing in the country today; 7 percent of those individuals are from rural communities.

Rural residents have had a long tradition of taking care of their own with reliance on relatives, friends, and neighbors. And anyway, this has been effectively disguising the numbers of rural homelessness in our community.

Homelessness in rural areas, you don't see them. They are not on the streets. We don't see them in our communities. They are in woods. They are in barns. They are doubled up with friends. They are in storage units.

Since homeless individuals are hidden like this, it is very difficult to count them. So when we do have our point-in-time street count and we count people that are literally on the streets or in a shelter, many of these folks go uncounted because we don't know where they are.

Because rural homelessness manifests itself differently from urban areas, the difference may be that we need to look at policy changes that are a little bit different for a rural area compared to an urban area. The rural homeless population make up more families and fewer single individuals. These individuals, in many cases, are working as well, and many of them are experiencing homelessness for the very first time.

What causes some of this housing instability? It is obviously the loss of affordable housing. Wages in rural areas many times have not kept up with the cost of living. People are underemployed, and the debt to Americans have taken on a great deal for this issue.

The other issue in rural areas that we see a lot is the deinstitutionalized of mental health without giving enough community-based housing to assist these folks.

Approaches to address homelessness have also changed over the years. Well, in the past, many of the approaches used to deal with homelessness were getting people simply off the streets and putting them into an emergency shelter.

Today, with the continuum of cares, which are CoCs, they work to transition homeless people into permanent housing solutions. Now, permanent housing solutions may be different for everyone. Permanent solution might be for someone a group home. It might be a rest home. It might be sharing an apartment with someone else. These are all—they are all different for every individual.

CoCs are geographically based entities created by HUD that are tracked with transitioning people—excuse me—that are transitioning the homeless population into the area through a range of services ultimately set up to meet their needs. A CoC may offer outreach and intake. It may link people to appropriate housing services. It may provide transitional support of housing. It may put people into permanent support of housing.

There are also many significant barriers in rural areas that are different than urban. One is the lack of transportation. There is very limited if no public transportation in rural communities. So how do you get to a service provider when you don't have a car?

Isolation. That is another issue in rural areas. People are so isolated due to the expansiveness of our area that they find it emotionally cutoff as well as geographically cutoff. There is a shortage of services in rural areas because our populations and our areas are not quite as large, and, again, there are barriers to employment which indicate transportation issues.

In closing, since the Interagency Council on Homelessness has a goal of ending homelessness in America by 2020, I feel that it is important that we consider, however, the rural population of individuals and families experiencing homelessness are made—may

need different policy solutions and practice models other than those living in urban areas.

We want to ensure individuals and families experiencing homelessness, they are considered as possibly a special population with unique barriers and needs. The Federal policies could be tailored and, when possible, flexible in order to make sure rural communities can meet the needs of residents who experience homelessness in rural areas.

And, again, thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bremer can be found on page 44 of the Appendix.]

Chairman DUFFY. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Lynn for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF PETER LYNN

Mr. LYNN. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman Duffy, Ranking Member Cleaver, Ranking Member Waters, and members of the subcommittee. I am Peter Lynn. I represent the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, which is a joint powers authority between the city and county of Los Angeles. We are the lead for the Continuum of Care, and we administer Federal, State, and local assistance county-wide. That includes programs focusing on prevention, on outreach, on shelter, and emergency crisis and bridge housing, as well as permanent housing outcomes for folks, including short-term rental assistance like the rapid rehousing program that Nan mentioned, permanent supportive housing programs that include durable rental subsidies.

We coordinate our work with many other partners, public and private, through Los Angeles' coordinated entry system. It is a very effective, collaborative, strategic planning mechanism and assessment tool, backbone of infrastructure to align all the services we are delivering into homelessness.

Our jurisdiction covers densely urban areas, like the city of Los Angeles. It includes suburban communities like those in the San Gabriel Valley, and it includes rural areas like those in the high desert up in the Antelope Valley.

Homelessness in Los Angeles is at crisis proportions. Last year, the number of people homeless in L.A. rose 23 percent, almost 58,000 Angelenos homeless on any given night in 2017. L.A.'s numbers were enough to impact the national picture last year.

And in L.A., unlike the rest of the Nation, our numbers are actually worse from an unsheltered perspective. Three-quarters of Angelenos experiencing homelessness are unsheltered. They are living in vehicles. They are living in tents. They are living in makeshift dwellings that are visible throughout the Los Angeles County.

Our ability—like others doing this work nationally, our ability to actually effectively address the homelessness of any given person that we can serve is actually increasing every year. We have more programming, and the effectiveness of our programming has gotten better and better.

We are moving more people into housing year over year. In 2016, we moved over 14,000 people out of a state of homelessness into permanent housing. That is an increase of 30 percent over the year before that, 61 percent over the year before that.

We project those numbers to increase as we deploy new local resources. Angelenos have voted to tax themselves, actually twice. There was a county-wide sales tax measure putting a quarter cent new revenues for homelessness and a city of L.A. bond measure to put $1.2 billion into new permanent supportive housing capital.

But the root—so the root cause of the crisis in Los Angeles is not the homeless crisis system. It is housing affordability. Our main challenge is that we are one of the least affordable housing markets in America by many metrics. We are—we have one of the lowest vacancy rates. We have one of the highest numbers of people paying more than half their income for rent.

Los Angeles, there are 700,000 renter households paying more than 50 percent of their income for rent. Of those, more than 300,000 of those households make under $20,000 a year. This is a very high-cost region. This is an enormous number of families that are absolutely on the edge of homelessness. They are one financial crisis, one car payment, one medical bill away from homelessness in Los Angeles.

Nationally, it is estimated that fewer than 25 percent of households that are income eligible for deeply affordable housing programs have access to these programs. In Los Angeles, 16 percent of those very low-income households are subsidized. We have a crisis of affordability in L.A.

Most people face homelessness due to the numbers we see for economic reasons. That is the primary cause of homelessness for the people that we speak to. There are other drivers, and history of incarceration is one of the primary drivers. It has an impact on people's economic stability and their ability to rent in the housing market.

Inequitable criminal justice enforcement has had a disproportionate impact on communities of color in Los Angeles and nationally. It is why the representation of African Americans in homelessness is very disproportionate to the representation of other communities. That is one of the issues that we have to address in addressing homelessness nationally.

We need to fund more affordable housing, both workforce and low income, and we need to fully fund the programs that address homelessness. As Nan pointed out, we know how to use the resources. We have been effective in reducing homelessness nationally, even though these programs have not increased their funding markedly.

We want to encourage you to support the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness. It has been an extremely effective partner in bringing together the Federal collaboration, partners that, for all their willingness, have not been the best at collaborating across agencies. We also think that their expertise at bringing information to local communities is unparalleled. They are one of the main drivers of the success of bringing information to those communities.

Also want to just thank the subcommittee for looking into this issue. It is a critical one for Los Angeles and for the Nation. We greatly appreciate your focus on homelessness.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lynn can be found on page 49 of the Appendix.]

Chairman DUFFY. Thank you, Mr. Lynn.

Ms. Bischoff, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF ANN BISCHOFF

Ms. BISCHOFF. Thank you.

Good afternoon, Chairman Duffy, and Ranking Member Cleaver, members of the subcommittee. It is an honor to be here today to recognize and state the unique needs of youth who are living without permanent housing in our communities.

My name is Ann Bischoff, and I am CEO of Star House. We are a drop-in center for youth ages 14 to 24 who are experiencing homelessness in central Ohio. My testimony today is from the perspective of a drop-in center that is operating in collaboration with HUD but outside of the HUD system.

We use the McKinney-Vento Education Act definition of homelessness, which includes youth who are without a permanent place to call home, including those who are living with another person due to hardship. They are called couch surfers.

My oral testimony today is condensed to three points: No. 1, youth homelessness is complex and growing; No. 2, there are proven practices within the drop-in center model; and No. 3, I would like to share some innovative ideas for addressing the workforce and housing needs of youth.

A recent research study by Chapin Hall—this is an institute with the University of Chicago—found that over a 12-month period, 1 in 30 13-to 17-year-olds were experiencing homelessness. The number was 1 in 10 for youth ages 18 to 25. This equates to about 3.5 million young people, and three-quarters of these young people slept on the streets and were also couch surfing.

More than half of these youth felt unsafe in these situations, and they were at high risk of exploitation. In fact, nationally, one in five of these youth have experienced human trafficking. Couch surfers are not currently eligible for HUD services because they do not meet the HUD definition of homelessness.

And here are some things that we have learned at Star House. We know that half of youth living on the streets experiencing homelessness have been in foster care, a quarter have aged out of care. So this tells us that they likely have no mom or dad there to support them during these crucial transition years to adulthood.

Jewish Family Services in central Ohio works with both Holocaust survivors and young people aging out of foster care. And they have told me that in a survey of youth aging out of care, they are scoring 8.5 on a 10-point scale of trauma. And the ACEs scale includes experiences like rape, abuse, assault, and so on.

Given what they know about Holocaust survivors, they are telling us that a score of 8.5 on average for these youth is equivalent to the experience of a Holocaust survivor. Forty-one percent have attempted suicide. This tells us that when you are not sure where you are going to be sleeping from night to night, your hope for the future is diminished.

We know that a quarter to 40 percent of these young people, depending on when you survey, identify as LGBTQ and they have been ostracized from their families. According to Chapin Hall, LGBTQ youth were more than twice as likely to report homelessness.

What all these statistics boil down to is trust. These are young people who were let down by the adults in their lives who were supposed to be there to love and support them. As a result, they would too often rather fend for themselves on the streets than reach out for help. In fact, our research at Star House tells us that 80 percent of these young people will choose a drop-in center over the adult shelter system for fear of being abused, victimized by the older adults there.

We know the story of a young man at Star House who ran away from an abusive situation at home, got a job at the mall, and slept behind a dumpster on an inflatable pool raft there just so he could get to work on time. He found Star House and was able to get a shower, a hot meal, and some other resources that he needed. He kept his job as a result, and he was able to move on and didn't need our services as long as others.

The story of another young woman is that she was living in an abandoned home and nailing wooden planks into the door each night just so that she could get enough sleep—peace to sleep at night. She was physically and sexually abused by her parents.

So the drop-in center model works because these young people have immediate access to basic needs. We work very hard to build their trust and to connect them with onsite resources like therapy, shelter—therapy, healthcare. This is a population that is 12 times more likely to die than their peers, and we work hard to connect them with housing, education, workforce development, and other resources.

Last year, we served 1,000 individuals, up from 400 in 2012. Our research shows that the longer young people experience the transience of homelessness by any definition, the more difficult it becomes for them to exit street life. Utilizing the McKinney-Vento Education Act definition, which includes couch surfers, allows us to assist all youth living without a permanent place to call home before they become chronically homeless.

A couple of innovative ideas for addressing the workforce and housing needs of youth: One, we know that 60 percent of youth, after coming to Star House, acquired a job. And when you ask the same youth if they still have the job, it is nearly 40 percent. So providing flexible jobs onsite at Star House will be a life changer for them. They will be able to access workforce development on their own schedule and be more likely to attain a permanent job once they secure housing.

Thank you for inviting me to share with you today. Youth homelessness is growing, and research tells us that the longer young people experience homelessness, they are more likely to—the harder it becomes for them to exit street life.

I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bischoff can be found on page 36 of the Appendix.]

Chairman DUFFY. Thank you, Ms. Bischoff.

I want to thank the panel for their statements.

The Chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes for questions.

I want to thank the panel again. I think we have done a nice job of getting a wide array of opinions and views from across the coun-

try, and, frankly, riveting and insightful testimony. So thank you for that.

Ms. Bremer, I want to turn to you first. Obviously, we share the same area, western, northern, rural Wisconsin. If you were to leave us with one point on how we can help you serve your community better, what changes can we make that would help you the most?

Ms. BREMER. I think the one change that we could make would be to have more flexibility in the HUD definition. And I can give you an example of this. I am part of the West Central CoC, which is in your district. We have a very large population of chronically homeless in that area. We have also a large population of homeless. That particular area we really want to follow the HUD definition of homelessness so we can serve the most vulnerable.

I also work in another county, Burnett County, which is extremely rural. They have zero chronic homelessness. But they have 20 children in their schools that are unaccompanied youth that I am not able to help with the HUD definition. These are kids that are sofa surfing. They have no permanent house. They are sleeping at Wal-Mart. They are going to the QuikTrip. But I would like to be able to work with those folks to get them into permanent housing, so I think the main thing would be flexibility.

Chairman DUFFY. Flexibility, OK.

I want to quickly ask you about the rapid rehousing program and your concern with being able to take a few more dollars for case management, is that correct, No. 1? And No. 2, why?

Ms. BREMER. This is what we are looking at. With HUD dollars that we receive, permanent supportive housing folks are the folks that have the greatest barriers. They receive a lot of case management. And to be honest with you, because they have been homeless for many years in some cases, they have also mental health and AODA issues, they need a lot of case management. And I think we are serving that population very well.

There is another segment of population that walks into our office, basically they hit a little bump in the road, and all they need is some rent assistance and they can be on their way. Those folks are succeeding and doing very well. It is the group in the middle, in the middle that really don't qualify for extensive permanent supportive housing support, but they need more than no case management at all.

So working with these clients, I think we can work with them and use funding more efficiently to move them into independence quicker, to be able to also work with the schools, go to conferences, and just move forward with their families.

Chairman DUFFY. And I want to thank you for bringing up the issue of transportation. Again, we don't have public transportation. You don't have a car that works very well, it breaks down, you can't get to your job, you lose your job, then you lose your house.

And if we could figure out a way of how we could get reliable transportation, and that is a—we have talked about this in the past, but that is a longer conversation, more thoughtful, on how we get resources to help people out or how we partner with community members to make this happen. This could deal with the critical issue that we have in our rural community.

Ms. Bischoff, I want to turn to you quickly. I am not sure—as you are speaking about foster care, I am sure you know of Congressman Mike Turner's bill that we had a hearing on recently that will bridge our kids coming from foster care to make sure they have housing.

The stats are stunning that—kids who come out of foster care and the rates of homelessness. Have you worked with Mr. Turner in this legislation, because you are like singing off the same sheet of music.

Ms. BISCHOFF. OK. No, I have not. I am not an expert in policy, but I know these kids, and I know that workforce development, requiring them to work when they are in a state of flux is very difficult for them. That is why we have developed a program called Star Works where young people will have access to jobs onsite—within our facility.

You know, they are coming to us inconsistently when they are in this transient state. They might come to the drop-in center at 10 o'clock on Tuesday and 2 o'clock on Thursday, but they are coming to us. And while they are there, they will have access to work opportunities, trauma-informed workforce development. This trauma piece is crucial for these youth.

We have young people who are getting jobs, and then one young man, 5 hours in, got into this perceived conflict with his boss. The fight-or-flight reflex kicked in and he left. So this training will teach them to stay. Work is important, but it needs to be flexible.

Chairman DUFFY. And Mr. Turner has a bill that, again, I think is going to move that gives foster youth a priority placement, one of the top three, as they move out of foster care.

My time is up, Mr. Lynn, but I was fascinated by your testimony and the issues that are happening in L.A. Wasn't sure if this was people coming from where Duana and I live, where it is cold, coming to L.A., but it seems like, no, this is an issue of income. It is an issue of expensive housing, prosecutors maybe in your area.

I am sorry that I don't have more time, but I am fascinated to hear more as we go through our witnesses to hear about your problems and how we find solutions to address your concerns.

With that, my time is up.

The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the full committee, the gentlelady from California, Ms. Waters, for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much.

And let me thank again Mr. Peter Lynn for being here. And, of course, his testimony to us should shock us all, with the 55,188 people experiencing homelessness in the Los Angeles area. And, of course, each time I visit the downtown Los Angeles area, commonly referred to as Skid Row, I can see the expansion and the growth in the homeless population.

And it seems to me that the tenting and the shanties and the shacks that are there housing people are almost all the way up to city hall. And so I am very, very concerned about this situation in Los Angeles, but I am very pleased about the work that has been done.

And I am very pleased that the people of the city and the county voted to tax themselves in order to, you know, not only increase housing, build housing, but for supportive housing. So they are cer-

tainly to be commended for that. And I think a lot of cities need to think about what they can do in order to reduce homelessness in their areas by asking the taxpayers to please participate even more in ensuring that we could get people off the street.

Now, let me just say, I had a visit this morning from the mayor of Oakland, Mayor Libby Schaaf. And she was here because they have a program where mayors and CEOs of companies are getting together to deal with homelessness. And I guess it is getting resources from both the public and the private sector.

And so her question to me was, what can we do to get the Federal Government to provide more resources to deal with this issue? And I had to admit that I was absolutely troubled by the fact that this Administration's funding budget for 2019 requests for cutting the Department of Housing and Urban Development's funding by $11 billion, including the elimination of at least 200,000 housing vouchers, the National Housing Trust Fund, the public housing, as well as many other critical housing programs.

Can you basically talk about what this would mean for your efforts to reduce homelessness in Los Angeles? I could ask everybody on this panel this question, but I was almost terribly embarrassed by the question when it was raised to me by the mayor of Oakland, what can you do, when I am facing these kind of cuts in the Federal budget.

How would this impact your efforts in our city, Mr. Lynn?

Mr. LYNN. Ranking Member Waters, it would be devastating. Nationally and locally, it is devastating. These are folks—the overwhelming majority of people who are on the Housing Choice Voucher Program, colloquially Section 8, are extremely low income; that is 30 percent of area median or below.

These are folks who would not be able to participate in the rental market at any level without assistance, without subsidy assistance. It would mean a shrinkage of the affordability nationally. We have not kept pace with poverty and the population in this country since the program was initiated in the 70's. It has continued to shrink effectively compared to the number of people in America and the number of people in poverty in America.

One of the primary bulwarks against homelessness are these deep, affordable programs, Section 8 being one of them, public housing being another. Not funding operating reserves and capital improvements for public housing also erodes that housing stock, which covers the same depth of affordability.

But the Housing Choice Voucher Program is the one that primarily allows people to move out into communities and get their—move their kids closer to schools that they want to participate in, move them closer to work that they need to—the jobs that they want. It is the one that allows people who are in those extremely low-income categories to get integrated into community and keep from homelessness. It would be devastating.

Ms. WATERS. Well, as you can see, there needs to be every effort that can be made by those who are working to try and deal with this homeless problem, whether it is elected officials, community leaders, et cetera, to see what can be done, to speak with this Administration, to speak with Ben Carson over at HUD, to see what

can be done to convince them, please, do not eliminate any housing vouchers. We need more.

We have people who have been standing in line for these vouchers for years. And to talk about cuts in the Department of Housing and Urban Development and in the elimination of these housing vouchers, we create more pain for everybody. And we just need to keep saying over and over again, Federal Government, Administration, HUD, please, please help with this problem in real ways. Enough talking about it; we have to do something, and that do something is money and resources.

Thank you so very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the Vice Chair of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Ross for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing.

I also want to thank our witnesses today for your passion and for your service. It is clearly more than a livelihood for you. It is a labor of love. And I appreciate your service, especially with those involving the homelessness of children and a permanent solution for that.

My first concern has to do with the competitiveness of the Continuum of Care grant program. One of the program priorities articulated by HUD has been the Housing First approach, which focuses on providing immediate access to housing, prioritizing providers that offer services to clients on a voluntary basis rather than on those programs that require sobriety, participation in education, work training, or service programs.

Under the policy, HUD gives considerable preference based on the program's commitment to using the Housing First model, placing programs that do not use that model at a severe disadvantage in competition for Federal dollars. For example, in my district in central Florida, this shift has led to some of our most successful results-oriented programs being unable to secure financial support from HUD.

So my question to each of you would be, briefly provide your thoughts on HUD's prioritization of programs that use the Housing First model. Is the scoring bonus for those programs warranted? What have been the results that you have noticed? And what are the potential downsides of this Housing First policy?

And I will start off with you, Ms. Roman.

Ms. ROMAN. The way I see the Housing First model and the way I think it works is that people have a difficult time addressing the very serious problems that they have if they are not in housing. The treatment doesn't work very well. The services don't work very well. So it just seems to work much better to get people into Housing First and then try to engage them in services and make services available. Sometimes people don't take them, but if the services are what people need, eventually they do tend to take them. So from my perspective, we have seen better outcomes as a result of taking that approach.

Mr. ROSS. Ms. Bremer.

Ms. BREMER. Yes, I can speak to that. I actually direct two different programs, one is a zero tolerance program and one is a harm

reduction model. And I morally really struggled with our zero tolerance model, because I felt I am looking at someone and saying, you need to follow my precious rules or I am not going to help you.

I think getting—

Mr. ROSS. Let me ask you, is that a result—do you run into many that don't want to help themselves or—because it is difficult. I understand the need for the housing. No question about it. But also, at some point, if we are going to make this, as each one of you talked about, a transition to a permanent solution of homelessness, they have to be gaining some sort of self-sufficiency. And if we can't provide those programs because of the Housing First competitive nature that we put them in Housing First and not look at the other programs, how do we resolve that conflict?

Ms. BREMER. And I do totally agree with that. I think there can be two types of programs. One thing, as we look at it at our shelter, is we will take anyone in. But I look at that as an opportunity. That gives me an opportunity not to just say let's get you into housing immediately. Maybe treatment might be a better option.

Mr. ROSS. Right.

Ms. BREMER. Maybe we can work with that individual to secure and meet some of their mental health needs. The one thing with housing is that is one thing that then the individual does not need to worry about.

Mr. ROSS. I understand.

Ms. BREMER. And that is one thing that we can help them with. But we can't lose one opportunity to try to get somebody into treatment, to try to get them to be in compliance with their mental health meds, because those are some of the major issues that we are also dealing with.

Mr. ROSS. Gotcha.

Mr. Lynn, in 30 seconds or less.

Mr. LYNN. I think the data is overwhelmingly supportive of the Housing First model as the most effective, and I think that is what we really have to listen to. Study after study demonstrates that it is more effective in housing people and more effective in keeping people housed, and I think that is what HUD is really focused on. They have used the data that is available to us to drive this model.

I think it is really important to recognize that housing is the lynchpin resource. It is the one that allows you to rest, close the door, collect your thoughts, collect yourself, and get yourself connected to these other resources. If you lose your housing because you are unable to maintain sobriety, which is very common—substance abuse has an extremely high recidivism rate—it is really hard to do. So when you lose your housing because you recidivate, it puts you back in a cycle of homelessness and keeps you there. Housing First has demonstrated its effectiveness, and that is why it is—

Mr. ROSS. Thank you.

Ms. Bischoff, as much as I would like to ask you, I think my time has expired. So—

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri, the Ranking Member, Mr. Cleaver, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to try to do this quickly. I made some comments similar to these at another hearing on what happens after some kind of a disaster, some major event. But when I was elected 14 years ago, my wife and I tried to get a house not too far from here, and we were warned that the neighborhood was too bad, but we could at least afford the house down there.

Fast forward now, I can't afford to buy a house down there. They have the—the Nationals play baseball down there. They have about 50 upscale restaurants and new apartments, new grocery stores. I can't afford to live there.

There are 179 census tracts in Washington, D.C. Sixty of them have already been ruled as gentrified, 60, and they are growing. I have always wondered, where are those people who live down there, where are they living now? And the area where they can live is narrowing inside the corporate city limits of D.C.

So what happens is that if you are making $7.25 an hour and you are getting up every morning and going to work and you can't afford to buy an affordable house, you are going to end up homeless. And people will say, well, he doesn't want to work. Well, if you are making $7.25 an hour, that is about $15,000 a year, and you are going to struggle, and you are essentially homeless in this town. And it could be—it is moving all across the country. It is the same issue. We don't have enough affordable housing.

So I think the whole issue of homelessness is compounded by—we have people with mental health problems. That is just the reality. Then you have people now who may be getting up every morning and going to McDonald's and still they are homeless. They can't make enough money. And the housing in this city is extremely costly. So this is a profoundly disturbing issue for me. I would like for you guys to fix it in the next 2 minutes, 50 seconds.

Ms. Roman? Anybody. Please, help.

Ms. BISCHOFF. You are absolutely right. There is an affordable housing issue all across our Nation. In Columbus, Ohio, our approach is part of our strategic plan, and it is called Community First, based on the model in Austin, Texas, a village there that encompasses the four pillars of stability, all on one site. You have affordable housing, where youth would be paying 20 percent of their income to live there, in either micro homes or efficiency apartments. There would be employment onsite available for them. And transportation, the fourth pillar of stability, as well as social connections.

A quarter of the 200 homes on the site would be set aside for mentors and staff who choose to live onsite and abide by the purpose of this property, which is to lift youth up, and we believe that this could change lives.

Ms. ROMAN. Affordable housing is the issue, and we are not going to rapidly build our way out of that. And I would just say, with respect to the homelessness situation, right now, the program, the Continuum of Care programs are pretty much full. And if an organization wants to innovate around housing solutions, which I think we do need to be doing some of, more sharing of housing to keep costs down, different kinds of housing configurations for people who have active substance abuse disorders and so forth, they really can't take the risk because of how tight the continuum is.

So I would suggest one thing that would be good to do would be to have an innovation fund in the Continuum of Care so that communities like those we have on the panel here could experiment with some different models that would help us address these housing concerns in the short term.

Ms. BREMER. I would like to add one thing to what Ann had said. We had done a test model, and it is very small scale, but it is a house. We placed three unrelated individuals there because they could not secure any other housing. Together, it is very affordable. They each have their own rooms, they share a kitchen and a living room. So those are some of the innovative ways that we would like to work with individuals in our community to maintain housing.

Mr. LYNN. I think also at the Federal level, affordable housing programs have been cut dramatically over the last several years, so the Community Development Block Grant program and the home program have both suffered really dramatic cuts. I know in Los Angeles County, the decline was about 35 percent between 2009 and 2016.

So those programs go right to the core of what needs to happen, which is construction of affordable housing. And those things—you know, as Nan pointed out, it is not something you can fix quickly. We need construction, we need units to keep up with households, and we need units of affordability to keep up with households in poverty, and those things need to work together on a national level.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Hultgren, for 5 minutes.

Mr. HULTGREN. Thank you, Chairman Duffy. Thank you all so much for being here. Appreciate your work.

I am going to address my first questions to Ms. Bremer, if I may. First, thank you. I am a huge fan of the Salvation Army and the amazing work the Salvation Army does certainly in Chicago, but all over the country, an incredible history there. So I just want to thank you for your work.

Your testimony mentions that rural areas have unique challenges to addressing homelessness. My district, which is just west of Chicago, it includes western suburbs, but also some rural areas, so I am sure that there are different challenges that what many people struggling with homelessness are encountering in more urban areas like downtown Chicago, just 30, 40, 50 miles away from most parts of my district.

I wonder if you could describe some of the unique challenges for addressing homelessness that are faced in rural areas. And then, are there certain solutions or services that are most effective at addressing homelessness in rural areas as opposed to more urban areas? And what do you think Congress ought to do to better address homelessness in rural areas?

Ms. BREMER. I think one of the main issues with rural areas with homelessness also is lack of transportation. All the distances are far. I was explaining to someone that, for me, we have clients that are on permanent supportive housing right now. Sometimes a case manager has to drive 1 hour to get to an appointment to see

another client. We have a very minimal lack of public transportation, and I think that is the largest obstacle.

When you start looking at centralized intake, which is an excellent model, but when you have one centralized intake in the middle of the county and it is 30 or 40 miles to get there, that makes that obstacle very difficult. Doing a lot more things electronically, having a lot of different agencies have the same centralized intake information so people don't have to be asked the same question after question, that would be totally beneficial.

I really like the prioritization that we are having so that we are serving the most vulnerable in our population first. But again, I just have to go back to transportation.

Mr. HULTGREN. Thanks.

Ms. Roman, your testimony, you also mentioned that homelessness has been going down faster in rural areas than in urban areas. Why do you believe this is the case? And what steps can be taken to get closer to eliminating homelessness in rural areas?

Ms. ROMAN. Well, I would agree that flexibility in rural areas is really the key. I don't think it is actually a definitional issue so much there as that if somebody becomes homeless and there is not a shelter bed so they are staying on someone's couch, that they are still homeless but they might not get counted that way.

So I just think rural communities need more flexibility to address the needs individually, and these transportation needs as well, which it may be that a transportation solution would solve the problem.

As to why the number is going down, I am not sure why the number is going down, but I do think that rural communities have some advantages. They have lower numbers. They tend more to be less tolerant of long-term homelessness and to act more quickly to resolve the situation.

Also, a lot of resources come to rural counties, and that allows the county itself to use the homeless resources in combination with TANF and housing, mental health, and other things, and just coordinate a little better. I actually think we could end homelessness in rural areas a little—pretty quickly, much faster than we could in urban areas if we just had a little—some adjustments to our approach there.

Mr. HULTGREN. Ms. Bischoff, if I can address my last minute to you. Thank you, first, for all that you are doing, and everyone there at Star House is doing, to address youth homelessness. I absolutely agree that providing the support necessary to help individuals and families find and maintain a job is key. I also appreciate the real life examples you shared in written testimony from the young man who lost his housing because his roommate could not pay his share of rent, to simply providing a reliable place to shower for another young man before he went to his job at the mall.

I wonder if you could discuss why the services that you offer under the McKinney-Vento Act are successful. And are there any improvements that you would recommend to helping address youth homelessness? Specifically, how can we help provide stable employment and other opportunities for self-sufficiency?

Ms. BISCHOFF. Representative, thank you for the question. Our services are successful because we are research-based. We started

out as a research project at OSU. And the research, one of the primary findings is that social connections were the greatest predictors of exiting homelessness. And I think in our programming, we too often take those connections lightly.

So at Star House, young people come in through the provision of basic needs. We are really in the business of developing strong relationships with them. We know them individually, not just on paper. That is why we have so many stories to tell. Through this relationship-building, then we connect them with easy access on one site, therapy, housing connections, jobs, education. For youth, we have to make the access to resources more flexible and more accessible.

Mr. HULTGREN. Thank you all.

My time has expired. I yield back, Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chairman recognizes the gentleman from Nevada, Mr. Kihuen, for 5 minutes.

Mr. KIHUEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member, and thank you all for being here this afternoon and for your insight.

Since the 2008 economic recession, thousands of Nevada families have been struggling to maintain access to safe and affordable housing, as it has been alluded to here with the rest of the country.

I represent the Fourth Congressional District based out of Las Vegas, north Las Vegas, in central Nevada. It was the epicenter of the housing crisis during the recession, and thousands of Nevadans lost their homes, and many were pushed into that rental market.

Today, we are facing a severe shortage of rental homes, as we are hearing here today, that are affordable and available to people with the lowest incomes. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there are only 15 affordable homes for every 100 extremely low-income families. Without affordable housing options, people live just one event, a car repair, an illness, from a destabilizing impact of evictions and, in worse cases, homelessness. So unfortunately, this cycle is playing out in southern Nevada, where we are experiencing a growing homeless population.

Today, Las Vegas is one of the top 10 cities in America, with the highest homeless population. And even more alarming, it is one of the fastest growing youth homeless populations in the country.

So with that, I have a couple of questions, and I will start with the homeless youth for Ms.—and I apologize if I mispronounce your last name—Bischoff. So nearly half of homeless youth have been in juvenile detention, jail, or prison. Can you talk about the relationship between our system of criminal justice and homelessness? And second, what barriers exist for youth with criminal backgrounds?

Ms. BISCHOFF. Absolutely. Thank you for the question, Representative. Our youth are caught in a situation too often where they engage in survival crimes. We have a young man recently, he grew up in an orphanage in Russia, moved to Ohio, and has this lack of understanding for trusting connections, so he is often finding himself on the streets. He is not really able to couch surf because of that relational issue, and he finds himself in prison or jail often as a result. So for him the challenge is very strong.

I think coming out of prison, being able to find housing in such a way where you are not evicted is also another barrier that they face. So we do need to pay more attention to youth aging out of care and youth aging out of juvenile justice to ensure that they have the relationships and connections in their lives to sustain that housing, employment, and other stabilizing features as they go forward.

Mr. KIHUEN. Thank you.

And, Mr. Lynn, also a question for you as well. The Trump Administration has proposed significant rent increases for families receiving Federal rental assistance. What would this proposal mean for your efforts to reduce homelessness? And do you have any reason to believe that this proposal will help families becoming more self-sufficient?

Mr. LYNN. We don't. One of the concerns we have is that the families that would be subject to these increases for rent are the poorest Angeleno families. Across the Nation, they are the poorest folks that we offer assistance to. So an increase that might sound like a manageable increase to a family that is at median income or above, like $100, is absolutely devastating to somebody for whom that is most of their income for that month.

There are a lot of households that are existing at severe poverty levels. And I think the one thing that we really would want to underscore is that these have profound impacts on people who are the least able to afford them.

I don't think work requirements are the best approach to people experiencing poverty. I think that providing opportunities for people to engage in workforce development is critical and is very, very important. But certainly, work requirements can push people into homelessness. And the rent increases for the poorest folks is a very, very, very, very, poor use of this resource.

Mr. KIHUEN. All right. Thank you.

And last question. Ms. Roman, in your experience, what are the biggest myths or misunderstandings about homelessness that you have had to confront? And how have you sought to change public perception on those fronts?

Ms. ROMAN. Well, I think probably the biggest myth is that everybody has mental illness and substance abuse, and once they become homeless, they stay homeless forever basically, until they are given a subsidy, and that is not true. Most people don't have mental health and substance abuse disorders, although those are overrepresented in the population.

And most people who become homeless self-resolve. They enter the homeless system, they figure something out, they leave, and they don't come back. So really who stays longer is the people with more serious problems.

How we seek to clarify that to people, we do communications and public information, and we rely also on you all understanding it and explaining it to the constituents as well.

Mr. KIHUEN. Thank you. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Stivers, for 5 minutes.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate you holding this hearing.

And my first question is for Ms. Bischoff.

Ms. Bischoff, welcome. It is great to have you here. You know, there are a lot of young folks that are, because of the definition of homelessness at HUD, they are denied a safe place to stay, and they are left to rely on the good will of family, friends, and neighbors, or live out of hotels or motels.

And my first question is, do you think that living—a child living in those type of conditions, either relying on the good will of extended family, friends, or neighbors, or living out of motels, is disadvantaged when it comes to education and health outcomes? And can you explain what that means?

Ms. BISCHOFF. Representative, thank you for the question. Absolutely, they are at a disadvantage. We know that this population is 12 times more likely to die, period, then their peers who are not homeless.

I work with young people who are living on the streets, sleeping in tents, sleeping on the proverbial park bench, and sleeping outside in the elements. The No. 1 killer of this population is suicide and overdose because of a lack of hope for the future. So healthcare is certainly important. That is why we have a health clinic onsite at Star House, so that they can have immediate access to those services.

In terms of workforce, getting to their place of employment becomes very difficult when they are living on the north side of town one night and the east side of town the next. They are getting jobs, as our research has shown, as I shared, but keeping those jobs becomes impossible. So we need flexible opportunities for them where they have access to trauma-informed workforce care—workforce development that is in sync with the jobs that are offered.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you for that. So as a follow up, are those young folks, these children growing up in those conditions of relying on the good will of extended family, friends, or neighbors, or living out of motels, more likely to experience unemployment or homelessness as adults?

Ms. BISCHOFF. Yes. Our research shows that the longer a young person experiences the transience of homelessness, by any definition, including those couch surfers, the more difficult it becomes for them to exit street life. So utilizing the McKinney-Vento Education Act, which includes those youth who are couch surfing, it allows us to assist all youth living without a permanent place to call home before they become chronically homeless, and the return on investment over the course of a lifetime will be exponential.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you, Ms. Bischoff. You also talked about how hard it is for them to get to employment when they don't know where they are going to live. What about getting to a school?

Ms. BISCHOFF. We have several youth at Star House who are currently enrolled in college. I think that is something that people don't realize. They have graduated from high school, they enroll, but when they are in survival mode, they are going to choose food and other basic needs over college and they withdraw and then they have debt, and there is a cycle of issues. So certainly, we need flexible opportunities of all kinds.

At Star House, in our strategic plan, as we develop this village, onsite we want college—community college opportunities for them that are virtual and flexible so that they can move forward toward stability.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you. I think, obviously, I know there are some people concerned about resources. But we have to figure out how to take care of these children. So I really appreciate the work you are doing. And I will tell you, a lot of us will stand up for more resources, but we have to get a definition that helps us get a count so we know what kind of resources to get, and that is why this bill is so, so important. Thank you so much.

My next question is about our veteran homelessness. And I will ask Ms. Bremer, I guess. Is there anybody who wants a question on veteran homelessness? Prefers it?

Mr. Lynn, you look excited.

Mr. LYNN. I would be happy too, but Nan, I think, is—

Mr. STIVERS. Would you like it, Mr. Lynn?

Mr. LYNN. I guess it depends on the question.

Mr. STIVERS. OK. Well, why don't I give you the question, and whoever wants to talk about it can.

So we have seen a huge drop in veteran homelessness, except among a special population; that is the population of veterans who either don't qualify under the definition of veteran as a result of serving in the Reserve as opposed to the Active Duty, or those who have discharges with other than honorable conditions.

Let me start with the question, a simple question. Do any of you think that somebody should be sentenced to a life of homelessness simply because their discharge is an other than honorable discharge?

Mr. LYNN. No one should be homeless.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you. So is that a problem you are seeing in your organizations? And do you believe that we should do something to address this special population of folks and try to make sure they get resources?

They don't qualify for the HUD-VASH (Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) program because of the definition of veteran, or their designation of service. But do you believe that we should try to do something to find a special assistance for that population?

Mr. LYNN. I think that the question, the way you framed it, really illustrates how effective resources are. This program, HUD-VASH program, the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program, together, have driven homeless veteran numbers so far down.

Mr. STIVERS. Close to zero.

Mr. LYNN. We would never have predicted that we could be so effective at this challenge of ending veteran homelessness before we put the resources in. You put the resources in, they really talk. It goes back to—

Mr. STIVERS. In Central High in Columbus, Ohio, 24 veterans, we are that close every night, and some nights we are at like 5 or 6 veterans, but we have never had more than 26, and almost every one is in that special population we just talked about.

Mr. LYNN. So resources matter. Finding resources to fit the needs of people who are experiencing homelessness, whether they are

other than honorably discharged veterans, whether they are people who have never served and are chronically homeless, whether they are youth, we need resources for everyone experiencing homelessness. Resources matter. That is why there is a challenge with the youth definition. If we don't put the resources behind it—we don't know how many kids are in that definition, but there are a lot more.

Mr. STIVERS. Let's not make those kids suffer until we figure it out, sir.

Mr. LYNN. So the resources behind it, we can use them. We know how to deploy them.

Mr. STIVERS. I am 1 minute and 48 seconds over my time, and the Chairman has been very generous. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the answer.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from New York, Ms. Velazquez, for 5 minutes.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Roman, earlier this week, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development released their draft spending bill for Fiscal Year 2019. The bill provides $3.6 million to U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which President Trump sought to eliminate in his Fiscal Year 2019 budget request.

Can you speak to the important role the Council plays? How will these additional resources help the Council combat homelessness nationwide?

Ms. ROMAN. So the Federal Government spends about $5 billion a year on homelessness from a variety of different agencies, five or six major agencies. And I think the investment of $3.6 million to coordinate those Federal agencies' investment of $5 billion, not to mention all the work that USICH does with communities around the country and spreading best practices to them and States, is well worth the investment. And I think that that coordination—which it is very hard for the programs to do. They do it but it is extra work, and they are trying to run the programs effectively.—it makes a huge difference, and it is a big reason why our numbers are going down.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Thank you. Ms. Roman, in his budget request, the President reduces funding for the Section 8 program, requesting approximately $19.3 billion, or $977 million less than Fiscal Year 2017 enacted levels. Under the President's request, New York City will lose approximately 15,000 Section 8 vouchers, and more than 200,000 housing vouchers will be lost nationwide.

With more than 200,000 fewer vouchers, how will HUD be able to address homelessness and housing poverty?

And, by the way, you mentioned the misconception of mental health and substance abuse. But what about the other misconception that homeless people don't work?

In places like New York, where we have 63,000 homeless people, they are the working poor, in many instances. The problem there is we don't have enough affordable housing, and there are not

many resources put into building new housing programs that will provide affordable housing.

Ms. ROMAN. Yes, of course. So if the budget proposal goes through, the result will be that more people will become homeless and fewer people will exit homelessness. And this is not a wise; however, you may feel about that, this is not a wise decision for the country economically, morally, socially, because letting people be homeless has a tremendous cost to us in all of those areas.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Mr. Lynn, would you like to comment?

Mr. LYNN. As I indicated earlier, I think the voucher program is one of the backbones of affordability for the poorest Americans. And I think that any cuts to it—the program has eroded over time with regard to its reach into the population of need. It needs to be expanded. The last thing we need is to erode the size and scope of this program.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. What about your take on the CDBG program? You know, in New York City, the CDBG program allowed the city to provide emergency shelter to 1,000 households in 2016. Can any of you discuss the importance of the CDBG program in combating homelessness?

Mr. LYNN. We use it very effectively in Los Angeles, and the city and county of Los Angeles both contribute CDBG funds into addressing homelessness, both through development of affordable housing, through provision of shelter, through other services. I think communities nationally have used it to address affordability issues that directly prevent homelessness. It has a lot of flexibility and is used to address homelessness, both preventing people from falling into it by contributing to the affordability in communities, and also by direct provision of services for people experiencing homelessness. It is a very important program.

Ms. ROMAN. I would just add, it also often pays for the staff to coordinate the homeless assistance locally.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Well, let me just say that I am so happy to see that the bipartisan T-HUD appropriations draft that was released, this bill, is a clear repudiation of the President's budget request of 2019, and I am happy to see that.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Rothfus.

Actually, I withdraw that.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Royce, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Roman, as you know, our Ranking Member, Maxine Waters, and I, along with Representatives Stivers and Joyce Beatty, have introduced the Working Together to End Homelessness Act, which continues the authorization of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

In your testimony, you noted the role that the Council plays in coordinating Federal agencies to enhance performance, to improve outcomes. Given the urgency here surrounding—and across the country—surrounding this issue of the opioid crisis, can you speak

to the Council's role in aiding Federal and local agencies with respect to the intersection of that crisis and homelessness?

Ms. ROMAN. Yes. Thank you for the question. The impact of opioids on homelessness varies. Some places it is a big factor and other places it is not, but it is obviously very key. USICH pulled together an interagency working group on opioids to align Federal efforts around the impact on homelessness and provide guidance. The USICH regional coordinators are working with communities on key strategies to address opioid use in homeless populations and help to stop that.

They have identified housing providers that are housing people who have opioid use disorders and shared those successful practices. They have instituted peer-to-peer learning and are providing written guidance to communities. So they really have led the effort to help homeless assistance organizations and systems to understand what the best practices that we know of to help people deal with opioids.

Mr. ROYCE. Well, thank you, Nan.

Any of the other members of the panel who want to add any specifics in terms of your communities?

Mr. LYNN. I think the opioid crisis draws out one of the key benefits of USICH, which is their ability to coordinate between Federal agencies. So you have substance abuse treatment and strategies that are deployed through Health and Human Services, combined with the work that is going on with the homeless assistance grants that come through HUD and other Federal agencies, and I think the coordination role is critical.

Mr. ROYCE. Can you just give me an example, Mr. Lynn, of how you do that in L.A.?

Mr. LYNN. Well, so, in Los Angeles, on the local level, we have the Department of Public Health, which is our local substance abuse prevention and control agency, working closely with the Continuum of Care. So we have deployed beds to address people with substance abuse issues.

The opioid crisis did not hit L.A. as hard as it has hit many other regions, but we do work very closely to ensure that there are substance abuse treatment beds available through the continuum and through the connection that people experiencing homelessness have to the rest of the resources. That kind of coordination is essentially what—those are the practices that are elevated up by USICH and can present a model of effectiveness to other communities. Los Angeles has a deep bench. Many communities don't. And the work that USICH does in terms of elevating what are best practices is critical to those communities that just don't have the same resource base or the depth of research.

Mr. ROYCE. President Reagan said that integrity and efficiency in managing Government programs not only save the Government money, they mean better service for those the programs are designed to serve. They mean better service for the people.

So, Nan, you testified that the Interagency Council on Homelessness, the budget there is a very modest sum, especially considering the scale of the targeted resources for ending homelessness. In line with the former President's maxim, would you say that the Council

plays a role in improving the efficiency of the Administration of these resources? And if so, could you just give us a quick example?

Ms. ROMAN. It absolutely does that. A good example might be the HUD-VASH program. So that is an incredibly effective program, as people have discussed already today, that provides vouchers from HUD and combines them with services from VA. You might think that is pretty straightforward and easy to administer, but in the process of implementing that, there have been so many decisions that had to be made that just weren't really happening: Who was eligible for the assistance, who decided who was the next person, what kinds of services, what was the case management ratio, who did the outreach? And really, those decisions weren't getting made until USICH stepped in and coordinated that, and now that program is functioning at a high level.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you very much, Nan.

I will yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Green, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Ranking Member as well, and the witnesses for appearing today.

I have been provided some intelligence, some information from staffers, and I bothered to try to validate it because it is something that is difficult to comprehend. And I have checked several sources, and most of the sources are close. Numbers may vary slightly, but the intelligence indicates that African Americans are about 12, maybe 12.5, under 13 percent of the population, yet they represent more than 40 percent of the homeless population. 12.5 percent, under 13 percent, total population, 40 percent of the homeless population.

Can someone explain to me why we have this disparity, please?

Mr. LYNN. I think it is really impossible to address that topic without confronting America's history of racial segregation and—

Mr. GREEN. I have 3 minutes and 31 seconds, and confront it to the extent that you can, please.

Mr. LYNN. Sir, if you look at African Americans in the county of Los Angeles, they comprise about 8 percent of the population. If you look at people in poverty in the county of Los Angeles, they comprise about 12 percent. So right there you have a dramatic overrepresentation of people who are very, very poor.

But if you look at people experiencing homelessness, the representation is 40 percent, which is 5 times the general population. And I think that there is intersectionality with housing discrimination. I think there is intersectionality with job discrimination. But if I had to put my finger on one thing, it would probably be criminal justice engagement and disproportionate impacts of inequitable criminal justice enforcement.

If you look at the population of the jails in Los Angeles County, they are 30 percent African American. So these things stack. Once you are incarcerated, you have a much harder time economically for the future. It is harder to get a job, it is harder to keep a job. It is harder to get housing, it is harder to keep housing. It is harder to maintain the social connections that Ms. Bischoff was talking

about that are so vital to people. It interrupts every pattern that folks have.

I think that is one of the strongest predictors of homelessness, but the overrepresentation of African Americans in homelessness, I think, says volumes about the challenges that African Americans are facing across systems in America.

Mr. GREEN. Yes, ma'am, if you would.

Ms. ROMAN. I just would concur. I would say the overrepresentation of African Americans in the poor population, housing discrimination, and then the feeder systems, so corrections is one, but foster care is another big one that are sending people in. I think what we don't know is whether the homeless system, which is on the receiving end of that disproportionality itself, is having a disparate impact on the population, and that is something that we are planning to look at in the next year, at the Alliance.

Mr. GREEN. Please. Others.

Mr. LYNN. So in Los Angeles—

Mr. GREEN. You have given me an answer that I am—I would just like to hear from the other members of the panel, please. Just give me your opinions. I would like to hear your opinions.

Ms. BISCHOFF. Representative, thank you for the question. I concur with Mr. Lynn and Nan. I know at Star House, about 60 percent of the youth there are African American. It is a little bit more than what you would see in the shelter. We attribute part of that to the young women in our program being more likely to be accepted into someone's home as a couch surfer, and these young men are not always welcome in the home of folks within their community.

I agree with Nan in terms of the systems that they are more likely to go into.

Mr. GREEN. Yes, ma'am, please.

Ms. BREMER. And I do agree with incarceration. That is a huge problem for the folks that we work with. Once you are incarcerated, you have that on your record, it becomes extremely difficult to secure any type of permanent housing.

Mr. GREEN. Well, my time is up. I will have a follow up question when I have the next opportunity to visit. I thank you.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Rothfus, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the panel for being with us this afternoon, and for the work you are doing in a very critical area for our country and in your respective communities.

Ms. Bremer, you mentioned in your testimony that mental illness and substance abuse are primary causes of homelessness for single adults in your region. As you may know, the opioid crisis has been devastating in western Pennsylvania as well. One of my main priorities is making sure that our resources are effectively deployed to do their best possible work, to help those suffering from addiction get clean, get back to work, and return to stable, fulfilling, and independent lives.

What can Congress do to give local providers the tools to address this multifaceted problem?

Ms. BREMER. Additional funds for treatment facilities would be extremely beneficial. In the rural area that I am in, we are seeing more meth addiction than any other addictions.

Additionally, the burden on foster care. At our shelter, and we are—keep in mind, we are in rural Wisconsin. At one given day, one of the communities had taken 14 children into custody because of meth use. And the scary part is, is many of the parents would be willing to go into treatment, but there is a lack of services, for one, and then they worry about what is going to happen to their children.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Any regulatory restrictions that would limit your flexibility to be dealing with this issue?

Ms. BREMER. Not so much. Again, I think I am looking at what we are looking at is additional funding.

Mr. ROTHFUS. OK. I think another new billion dollars is going to be made available this coming September on treatment programs.

Ms. Bischoff, in your testimony, you wrote that all agencies need the freedom to grow and try new concepts to lift youth who do not have a permanent home out of homelessness.

Representative Stivers had a line of questions. He raised the definition of homelessness. Given what Representative Stivers has been talking about with his legislation, has HUD given solving youth homelessness the priority it deserves, do you think?

Ms. BISCHOFF. Representative, thank you for the question. I think HUD is beginning to recognize the need. They recognize the drop-in center model as an important piece of the puzzle. They are also part of the 100-day challenge that has been going on, and an effort of the committee to address youth homelessness across the Nation. So I would say that we are all beginning to learn more about the population, why they are hiding, and how to bring them in.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Ms. Roman, I understand that veteran homelessness—again, this is an issue that Representative Stivers brought up—has fallen significantly in recent years. How can we apply what we learned in the fight to reduce veteran homelessness to interventions targeted at other subgroups, whether it is young people, families, and those suffering from drug addiction and mental illness?

Ms. ROMAN. Well, I really think that the reason for success in the veteran arena is because we had the key tools that we needed in terms of interventions. That was permanent supportive housing for high-need people and rapid rehousing for lower need people, and also some emergency assistance. And really, there was a tremendous political will around it and the resources were scaled to the size of the problem, and that is what allowed us to make that progress there and so rapidly.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Lynn, your testimony details L.A.'s homelessness crisis as a, quote, crisis of housing affordability. Other high-cost cities, all with housing affordability problems on their own, they don't seem to have the homelessness epidemic that L.A. has. What makes L.A. different from other high-cost areas around the country?

Mr. LYNN. So I think part of the issue is just scale. You have to remember, Los Angeles County has over 10 million residents. It is

the most populous county in America, and is actually, if it were a State, it would be the ninth largest State. So it is very, very big. And I think that we do not have the per capita homelessness that some other communities do, but from the scale of how big Los Angeles is.

So housing affordability is a key driver, but we have the same challenges that many other communities face. There are a significant plurality of people with serious mental illness. There are a significant plurality of people who face substance abuse issues. We have been working to integrate discharge from our foster system into the homelessness planning and that work is going to be instrumental in preventing homelessness. But I think that many of the drivers that we have seen across the country also affect Angelenos at a much larger scale.

Mr. ROTHFUS. One of the things in your testimony, you said, homelessness in L.A. did not arise overnight or over a few years, but as a result of many policy choices we have made, both Federally and at the local level.

I am wondering, have local zoning laws contributed to housing affordability in Los Angeles?

Mr. LYNN. I think that it would be hard to argue otherwise. Certainly, the housing unit production has not kept up with households in Los Angeles County, and that puts a real squeeze on affordability. That would do the same anywhere in the—

Mr. ROTHFUS. Any other local issues besides zoning that might be a factor? Reflecting in your testimony you were talking about policy choices at the local level.

Mr. LYNN. I think particularly land use issues are the key there.

Mr. ROTHFUS. I yield back.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from California, Mr. Sherman, for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

Between 2009 and 2016, Federal funding for affordable housing in Los Angeles County declined 35 percent. That is certainly one of the reasons why we have seen this huge increase in homelessness. But another, as Mr. Lynn points out, is just the incredible cost of building a new apartment unit, given the very high fees that local governments impose on each unit and given the high cost of land and given the fact that you are strictly limited as to how many units you can put on a piece of land.

Mr. Lynn, what would be the impact of the Administration's rent reform and work requirements, the so-called Making Affordable Housing Work Act, on homelessness in the Los Angeles area? Would this initiative help the city serve more people or would it exacerbate the problem?

Mr. LYNN. I think it would clearly exacerbate the problem. I think the concern that we have in raising minimum rents for people who are the poorest housed folks that are in Los Angeles is of grave concern, very concerning. The impact of work requirements on households, particularly families with children, families with disabled members, I think it would only exacerbate the problem, sir.

Mr. SHERMAN. Now, although Los Angeles County does have 10 million people, and New York has even more, although it is divided into several different counties, we see one in every four people experiencing homelessness last year, did so in New York City or Los Angeles. Is that because of the high cost of housing in those areas? Because it occurs to me that unemployment is a problem nationwide. Addiction is nationwide. Psychological and other health problems are nationwide. And yet we have one in four people in those two cities.

Is there something else that causes disproportionate homelessness in the two largest metropolitan areas that you can put your finger on, other than the very high cost of an apartment?

Mr. LYNN. So I think high cost of living is the key issue. Both of those are very unaffordable communities, and the unemployment rate is actually quite low. We are experiencing quite a robust economy in the Los Angeles area. The challenge is that most of the jobs and most of the income has actually gone to above median income households. So what happens is, as the economy picks up, people have better paying jobs. Folks who are making minimum wage and people who are below minimum wage who have fixed incomes, they are on benefits program, they are on pensions, they feel an extreme squeeze as the rents increase, as people can pay more, and there is a fixed housing stock issue.

Mr. SHERMAN. Now, we in California need to build 180,000 units a year. We are a growing State. We are building 80,000. What can the city of Los Angeles do to bring down—to encourage people to build more apartments, condos, affordable housing, or even housing that somebody would move into, thereby vacating another unit that would be affordable? How do we get more housing built in Los Angeles?

Mr. LYNN. So I think the city and the county are looking at this. One of the issues that has driven a lot of interest is the building of accessory dwelling units, which are generally as of right in most areas, and I think there is the ability to put a second unit on your lot. Often called granny flats or a second dwelling unit. I think that that holds out a lot of promise. I think there has been a lot of work to address this concern and think through what is the impact of land use policy on constraining supply to address this issue.

Mr. SHERMAN. What fee is charged in Los Angeles per unit to pay for the infrastructure, the parks, et cetera, that is already there? Let's say you have the right to build a 5-unit—I will use a round number—a 10-unit building. What does the city charge you for the right to do that?

Mr. LYNN. I don't actually know, sir. I have covered a lot of zones, but that one is a little far outside my zone, sir.

Mr. SHERMAN. OK. Because I am told figures of well over $100,000, whereas, in most of the country, the cost of construction, land, everything, per unit, would be less than that. So I don't know if the figure is that high, but advocates for making it easier to build apartments are saying that it totals that.

Mr. LYNN. I will find out and get back to you, sir.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

Chairman DUFFY. The gentleman yields back.

I want to thank our panel for their testimony today. I would just note that you can see there is a bipartisan interest in trying to resolve these solutions and both sides coming together to help the most disadvantaged among us in our communities, whether it is from L.A., to rural Wisconsin, and anywhere in between, to Ohio. It is incredibly important, and I think you see a willingness from this committee to try to do the best we can.

I just want to thank you for your insight, and look forward to continuing to work with this panel and others as we navigate this important issue to make sure that we do the right thing as policymakers, again, to help the most folks in our communities. And so, again, thank you for your testimony and your time.

Without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit additional written questions to the Chair which will be forwarded to our witnesses.

I would ask our witnesses, if possible, please respond as promptly as you are able.

And without objection, this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:15 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

May 17, 2018

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TESTIMONY OF ANN BISCHOFF, CEO
STAR HOUSE

HEARING ON "AN OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA"

BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCIAL SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON
HOUSING AND INSURANCE

THURSDAY, MAY 17, 2018 AT 2:00 PM
ROOM 2128 OF THE RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Good afternoon, Chairman Duffy and Ranking Member Cleaver. It is an honor to address this Committee about current, innovative efforts to address youth homelessness.

I will share five key points: 1) youth homelessness is complex and growing; 2) proven and promising approaches; 3) real stories of survival; 4) thinking outside of definitions; 5) innovative approaches for helping youth achieve stability.

My name is Ann Bischoff and I am the CEO of Star House, a drop-in center for youth experiencing homelessness located in Columbus, Ohio. I am also a member of the Columbus Committee to Address Youth Homelessness, which is developing our community's response to address youth homelessness. I joined Star House two years ago after founding mentor programs for alumni of foster care and learning about their unique barriers to stable housing. My testimony is from the perspective of a drop-in center that operates in conjunction with, but outside of, the HUD system. I hope that you will find this outside-in perspective beneficial to the conversation today. I am prepared to answer any questions you might have about the drop-in center model, the need for youth-friendly shelter and housing, as well as innovative, trauma-informed approaches for meeting the housing and workforce needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

Star House is a 24/7, research-infused, drop-in center that is dedicated to finding and engaging the estimated 2,000 youth, ages 14-24, who are experiencing homelessness in central Ohio. We use the McKinney Vento (Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, per Elementary and Secondary Education Act) definition of homelessness, which includes youth who are sharing the housing of someone else due to hardship. We are not a shelter and do not receive HUD funding. Star House's outreach staff visit locations where homeless youth gather - soup kitchens, libraries, college campuses, parks, and wooded areas. They share information about Star House services and invite youth to refer others in need of services. For every individual youth we find on the streets, three additional youth find Star House by word of mouth. Young people who visit Star House have immediate access to basic needs and onsite mental health therapy, case management, health care, enrichment and connection to housing, transportation, employment, education, legal aide, government benefits, ID cards and other stabilizing resources. In 2017, we served 996 individuals with 34,000 unique visits, up from 400 individuals served in 2012. The youth we serve are by-and-large estranged from their immediate families; many are unaccompanied minors who have run away from abusive situations.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IS COMPLEX AND GROWING

Recent Research by Chapin Hall found that 1 in 30 youth, ages 13-17, experienced homelessness over 12 months. One in 10 young adults, aged 18-25, experienced a form of homelessness over a 12-month period, which equates to three and a half million people. The Chapin Hall study involved a national population survey that included youth who were not able to access shelter.

Foster care. The 2017 quarterly surveys of Star House guests revealed that 47% have been involved with children services; 26% aged out of foster care at age 18 and are far less likely

to have support from their parents while transitioning into adulthood. Jewish Family Services in Columbus, Ohio shared the results of their PTSD surveys of youth aging out of care, as compared to what they know about the Holocaust survivors they serve. On average, youth who entered foster care due to abuse and neglect, scored an 8.5 on the 10-point ACES scale that measures severe traumatic experiences, such as death of a parent, rape, assault, starvation and neglect. This level of traumatic experience, according to JFS, is on par with the Holocaust survivors they serve.

Human Trafficking. One-third of homeless youth have experienced intimate partner abuse, which denotes human trafficking. The population is highly susceptible to exploitation, in part because too often no one is looking for them. Nationally, one in five homeless youths are trafficked.

Suicide. When youth are struggling to find food and a safe place to sleep, their hope for the future is too often diminished. Forty-one percent have attempted suicide at least once—suicide is a leading cause of death among this population that is 12 times more likely to die than their peers who are not homeless.

Ostracized. A quarter to 40% of this population, depending on the survey, identify as LGBTQ and have been reportedly ostracized from their families. According to Chapin Hall, LGBTQ youth were more than twice as likely to report homelessness, and unmarried parenting youth were three times as likely to report having been homeless.

Transient and unsafe. The Chapin Hall study revealed that 72% of youth who slept on the streets or in shelters also stayed in the housing of another person, i.e. couch surfing. More than half of these youth felt unsafe in these situations. Staying with other people puts youth at higher risk of harm and exploitation. These youth are not eligible for HUD homeless assistance services.

What all of these statistics point to is high orientation for trauma and low orientation for trust. Nearly all of these young people have been let down by the adults in their lives who were supposed to be there to love and support them. As a result, too often they would rather fend for themselves in the shadows of our society than reach out for help. Youth in this state prefer a drop-in center where there is immediate, low barrier access to resources at one location. Our research shows that social connections can spark the resilience needed to overcome adversity and achieve stability.

PROMISING AND PROVEN APPROACHES

Star House was founded in 2006 as part of a research project of The Ohio State University (OSU) by Dr. Natasha Slesnick. That year, Dr. Slesnick began the second part of a project that began in Albuquerque, NM, evaluating three separate treatments for homeless youth: CRA (Community Reinforcement Approach), MET (Motivational Enhancement Therapy) and case management. This project continues to guide our social connections-based service philosophy of unconditional regard for the youth we serve.

Social connections were found as the greatest predictors of exiting homelessness. The findings suggest that developing trust and linkages between homeless youth and service providers may be a more powerful immediate target of intervention than targeting child abuse issues, substance use and mental health problems. Substance use and associated issues were significantly reduced in all three treatment types, with little difference between the three, meaning the specific treatment is less important than finding which one encourages participation from the individual. It also found that social capital variable significantly predicted substance use frequency, sexual risk behavior, depression, delinquent behavior as well as number of days homeless. Meaningful change goes beyond addressing the individual, and gears towards modifying the social context of their lives.

In 2012, Dr. Slesnick began a new project that recruited non-service connected youth, randomly assigned them to a drop-in or shelter condition, and provided them with six months of Strengths Based Outreach and Advocacy. Youth were far more likely to access the drop-in center than a shelter. Of a sample of 79 street-living youth, 40 were referred to adult shelter and 39 were referred to a drop-in center. Of those referred to shelter, only 18% went. Of those referred to the drop-in center 80% went. What's more, 31% of youth referred to shelter found their own way to the drop-in center. Youth who went to the youth drop-in center, Star House, were linked to more service connection and a greater reduction in hard drug use. It also found that the longer youth experience homelessness, the more likely they are to experience substance use, victimization, and mortality, and the harder it becomes to exit street life. For this reason, the drop-in center model, which connects youth with stabilizing resources is an essential component of a coordinated community response.

We were very fortunate to have been incubated as a program of the University for ten years. On July 1, 2017, Star House became an independent social service agency. As the only drop-in center in central Ohio and the only drop-in in the nation that has on-going, in-house best practices research, it was important to us to ensure that this research continues. We house two OSU offices through which researchers continue to glean best practices for meeting the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness ongoing. Notable current studies include providing 240 drug-abusing mothers experiencing homelessness with Ecologically Based Treatment to test the feasibility of providing complex housing and supportive services outside of an overburdened shelter system. Given the high risk for suicide, another project is providing 75 youth who report severe suicidal ideation with Cognitive Therapy for Suicidal Patients (CTSP) with the goal of reducing premature mortality, hospitalization and loss of human capital in a very high-risk population of youth.

REAL STORIES OF SURVIVAL

There is no one pathway to homelessness for youth and there is no one pathway to stability. Here are three very different youth experiences.

1) Recently, a young woman experiencing homelessness shared with me the horror of her upbringing. She was repeatedly physically and sexually abused and even pimped out by her parents. She escaped her family and has been living on the streets ever since. Last reported,

she was staying in an abandoned home, nailing wooden planks across the door with a make-shift hammer each night, just to get enough peace to sleep. Having been victimized, she prefers this living situation over going to the adult shelter for fear of being victimized by the older adults there. While she is employed, her employment history matches the transience of her housing patterns. She needs safe, youth-friendly shelter with a defined pathway to therapy, employment, housing and social connections.

2) One young man came to us after weeks on the street. He had relocated to Columbus, after leaving an abusive situation at home. He quickly secured a job at the local mall. To ensure that he arrived at work on time each day, he slept on an inflatable pool raft behind a nearby dumpster. He was relieved to find Star House where he could have a hot meal, a shower, a change of clothes, and a bus pass. He only needed our drop-in services for a short time before he was able to secure housing and continue on the trajectory toward stability.
3) Another young man, grew up in foster care from birth, living in several different homes before aging out at 18. Despite his transient schooling, he earned a B-average GPA from his suburban neighborhood high school. He had a dream of becoming a chef and owning a restaurant. After graduation, he secured an apartment with a friend. Each paid half of rent and utility costs. He also had a job as a line cook within walking distance of his home. Everything seemed to be going according to plan, until his roommate could no longer pay for rent or utilities. Without the means to cover his friend's half of the rent as well, the young man was evicted and forced to couch surf on the other side of the county. No longer living within walking distance of work, he could no longer get there consistently. He lost his job and became trapped in the catch-22 of no job, no transportation and no home. From this state of despair, he found other alumni of foster care who helped connect him with a job and housing and continued to be a source of support for him during his transition into adulthood.

THINKING OUTSIDE OF DEFINITIONS

I can understand the array of arguments regarding the definition of homelessness. On the one hand, advocates argue that the issue of homelessness is already insurmountable within the constraints of the current HUD definition. They argue that to change the definition, would mean taking away resources from the individuals who meet the current definition of homelessness, in order to meet the needs of those who would qualify under an expanded definition. They argue that funding should be expanded before a change in definition takes place. Without the assurance of sustained funding, there is reluctance among service providers to expand programming or to try new innovations to meet the needs of highly transient youth. This is a valid concern.

Because Star House is an independent drop-in center, rather than a shelter, and because we are supported for our innovative approaches, we do not operate within the confines of definitions. We simply see on a daily basis youth, ages 14-24, who are struggling to survive without family or home. Our research shows that the longer youth experience the transience of homelessness by any definition, the more difficult it becomes for them to exit street life. Utilizing the McKinney Vento Education Act definition allows us to assist youth before they become chronically homeless.

As the debate continues, I encourage us to think outside of the confines of definitions and to decide what we think is acceptable for youth who grow up in our nation. Youth without a

permanent place to call home, regardless of where they are staying from night to night, are without stability. Instability in housing, employment and transportation impacts the likelihood of breaking out of homelessness permanently. Solving this difficult issue requires the flexibility to incorporate known best practices from all youth serving agencies.

All agencies need the freedom to grow and try new concepts to lift youth who do not have a permanent home out of homelessness.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR ADDRESSING WORKFORCE AND HOUSING

Star House's strategic plan includes implementing social enterprise to address workforce needs among transient homeless youth and collaborating with partners to offer a trauma-informed village based on the Community First! Village in Austin, Texas.

In 2017, 57 percent of Star House guests surveyed stated that they acquired a job after coming to the drop-in center. However, when the same youth were asked if they were currently employed, 37% said yes. Sustaining employment is a recurring barrier to achieving stability in housing for two primary reasons: trauma-related triggers and behaviors in the workplace and inability to maintain transportation and housing proximity to their places of employment. Recognizing these challenges, Star House is implementing a trauma-informed workforce development pilot program, Star Works, in Summer 2018. The program includes: 1) trauma-informed workforce development, provided by trauma and workforce expert Jewish Family Services. The training empowers youth to recognize and overcome the effects of trauma on their resilience and behaviors; 2) flexible, Star House-based job opportunities through the assembly of table-top floral arrangements for local businesses in need of weekly arrangements; and 3) trauma-informed mentoring/coaching through a secure app. Successful graduates of Star Works would be able to sustain in-demand, livable wage jobs after securing stability in housing, transportation and community. Through this innovative model, Star Works will have the opportunity to offer flexible training and employment to highly transient youth who otherwise would not be able to work, until stability was achieved.

Star House and community partners are developing a community model based on the Community First Village in Austin, Texas, which serves older adults who are coming out of chronic homelessness. Through this model, one site is devoted to offering the four pillars of stability: affordable housing, employment, transportation and social connections. Three-fourths of homes would be devoted to the homeless population. One-quarter would house staff and mentors who chose to live on-site and abide by the purpose of the property— helping youth achieve stability. The community-focused design would enable young adults to focus on completing college and certification in in-demand career fields during life's crucial transition years between new adulthood and age 24. Ensuring housing, jobs and access to transportation are locked in, while establishing a safety net of supportive relationships, will ensure youth launch successfully to stability.

Thank you for inviting me to share today. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have and invite you to consider visiting Star House or another drop-in center in your district to learn more about the barriers that youth experiencing homelessness face.

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THE SALVATION ARMY

Grace Place Shelters

Testimony by Ms. Duana Bremer

Social Service Director

The Salvation Army of Polk, Burnett and St. Croix Counties Wisconsin

House Committee on Financial Services

Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance

May 17, 2018

Homelessness in Wisconsin

Good morning. My name is Duana Bremer and I am the Social Service Director for The Salvation Army Service Extension serving Polk, Burnett and St. Croix Counties WI. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance Committee chairperson Sean Duffy, Ranking Member Emanuel Cleaver and the rest of the committee members for inviting me to be with you today. We are so grateful for the opportunity to be part of this important conversation on how to help homeless families and individuals seek permanent Housing.

On any given day, there are over 5,000 people in Wisconsin without a place to call home. They are sleeping in shelters, in cars, under bridges, in caves and in storage units. Some may be sleeping in transitional living projects. Nevertheless, all lack a safe, stable, and permanent home.

Homelessness is a statewide issue, affecting every county in Wisconsin. Of those 5,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night, 67% are located in a county other that Racine, Dane, and Milwaukee (which are the largest population areas)

When you think about homelessness, a person sleeping on a park bench or in a doorway is often the image that comes to mind. While this is common, homeless may also be a person in a camper on someone's property (with our without the owner's permission). They may be sleeping in in a car in a store parking lot. People also stay in makeshift campsites deep in the woods.

Rural areas have unique challenges to addressing homelessness. Services are difficult to access due to a lack of transportation and distance. Where there are emergency shelters, they may be small and at capacity. The use of vouchers rely on limited community-based funding and availability of motels.

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United Way

Grace Place located in St. Croix County (pop. 87,513) is one of the largest shelters in a rural area. With the capability to house 64 individuals, this facility includes a population of families and single individuals. This facility is often full with a waiting list.

Homelessness does not only influence single adults; it affects families and youth as well. Almost half (47.4%) of the people experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin are families with minor children. This is higher than the national average, which is 35%.

Single adults experiencing homeless are significantly more likely to have a disability. In Wisconsin, 40% of people experiencing homelessness in 2016 had a disability and of those 295 had a mental illness.

In Wisconsin, the precursors to homelessness are domestic violence, mental illness and poverty. For single adults, mental illness and substance abuse along with the lack of services to address these disabilities are among the primary causes. For families, low wages were among the primary causes.

During the 2017 January PIT (Point in Time) count in Wisconsin, there were 5,127 people identified as homeless on one night with the 18% in Milwaukee County, 11% in Dane County, 4% in Racine and 67% in rural counties in Wisconsin. Comparing the January 2016 PIT to the January 2017 total data there was an overall 12% decrease in the number of people experiencing homelessness on that one night in Wisconsin. However, there was an 8% increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in rural communities.

In Rural Wisconsin, there are many unique partnerships to assist homeless families in providing housing as well as skills to move them out of poverty. There are many examples of these collaborations. The state funds local providers to offer homeless services and perform outreach to clients who are homeless. Services include, emergency shelters, one time rent assistance, short term supportive housing, permanent supportive housing, utility payments, transitional housing and assistance in accessing other mainstream resources. In addition, private donors and private foundations offer additional funds to provide the needed case management to assist clients maintain housing stability.

To illustrate some local Strategies:

1. The Salvation Army, Grace Place Shelter, offers a program designed to assist severely mentally ill individuals secure social security benefits. The primary goal of this program is to increase the receipt of SSI/SSDI among people experiencing long-term homelessness, especially for those who have mental illnesses or co-occurring substance use disorders. We will be utilizing the SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery) model to achieve this objective.

   The SSI/SSDI application process is complicated and difficult to navigate, particularly for people who are homeless or who are returning to the community from institutions (jails, prisons or

hospitals). For those who have a mental illness, substance use issues, or co-occurring disorders that impair cognition, the application process poses an even greater challenge.

People who are homeless and have serious mental illnesses need much more than a stable address and steady income, they also need access to the mental health and substance abuse treatment that could help them take the first steps to recovery. Obtaining benefits from the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA) can play a crucial role in access to housing and services needed for a homeless person's return to a life in the community. These benefits include Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

2. North Central Community Action of Wisconsin, The Salvation Army, and North Central College operates a learning center at The Salvation Army to assist shelter residence in furthering their education by providing teacher to work with people obtaining their GEDs or taking tests to improve their reading and math skills.

3. St. Vincent DePaul, The Salvation Army and The Sisters of St. Joseph of the third order St. Frances. Combined efforts to open a warming center in Barron County Wisconsin. This facility provided a warm, safe place to sleep and a dinner meal until space was available in a program that offered a permanent solution addressing their issues.

4. West Cap is partnering with Family and Children's Center to provide Tenant-Based Rental Assistance to youth aging out of foster care. West Cap provides up to 18 months of rental assistance with HOME-TBRA funding, and the Family and Children's Center provide case management and other Supportive Services.

5. The Salvation Army/Grace Place Shelter tutoring for children residing at our shelter. Our learning center provides students a space designed for education. The center is staffed with retired teachers available to assist students with homework tasks and remedial skills as needed. The facility is also equipped with a computer lab. The majority of children that are homeless are 1 ½ to 2 years behind in school. All school age children are required to attend the afterschool-tutoring program. Our coordinator contacts each child's teacher to determine areas that need academic improvement. The coordinator will also work with Parents to assist them with parent teacher conferences and independent education plans for their child. Most students improve ½-grade level during their 60-day stay.

   The McKinney-Vento Act also ensures homeless children transportation to and from school free of charge, allowing children to attend their school of origin (last school enrolled or the school they attended when they first became homeless).regardless of what district the family resides in. It further requires schools to register homeless children even if they lack normally required documents, such as immunization records or proof of residence Due to our rural area, we work with 15 school districts. The homeless liaisons in each district are able to ensure the children residing at our shelter are able to attend their school the first day they arrive at the shelter. Many days we have as many as 7 different school districts transporting children from our facility. McKinney-Vento also

ensures each child receives free breakfast and lunch prior to completing the application. In addition, the school provides any fees for extracurricular activities.

The Wisconsin Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness was created in 2013 to respond the Governor's desire to better coordinate statewide resources, drive policies to eliminate homelessness, and assist homeless individuals in finding stable housing so they are then able to access the resources needed to become self-sufficient. The Council meets on a quarterly basis and has significant steps to reduce barriers, share data on trends, and identify emerging trends.
An excellent example of this is the partnership between the Family and Children's center and West Cap to utilize Home-TBRA fund to provide housing for children aging out of the foster care system.

I was also able to meet with Michael Luckey chair of the Wisconsin Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness last week to discuss additional case management services. Currently we are providing extensive case management to individuals participating in our Permanent Supportive Housing programs. Participants in this program are chronically homeless individuals with mental illness. Families with very little barriers are able to meet with a case manager at the time they receive initial service. However, the families in the middle than participate in the Rapid Re-housing programs needs more case management that we are able to provide at this time. Working in collaboration with state agencies and stakeholder groups to determine the best use of limited dollars as we address the need for additional case management services.

Through my work with the homeless population for the past 15 years. I have realized that the strategies focusing on collaboration to utilize excising funding from State, Federal, and private donors more effectively. We are able address issues comprehensively at the time of the first homeless episode. Together we are able to assist households in accessing needed services and to intervene in the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

In addition, according to the National Alliance to End Homeless, providing housing with supportive services creates an environment in which program participants are less likely to draw on expensive public services, use of homeless shelters or be incarcerated. Frequent and avoidable visits to the emergency room, inpatient hospitalization for medical and psychiatric care, and nursing home stays can also be avoided.

Whatever the level of service that is needed, it makes the most impact when it comes through intensive case management. Whether the delivery method comes from a "housing first" or transitional program, or day-to-day check-ins by volunteers, regular sustained interaction with a caseworker best helps those struggling with drug and alcohol addition, mental illness, abuse survival or other trauma.

In Conclusion:

The Salvation Army is part of the community, a collaborator with government and non-government entities seeking to serve those in need. We are very grateful for this opportunity to address the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance regarding issues that affect homeless families and individuals in our communities. Specifically addressing the need for additional case management activities that will ultimately reduce the burden homelessness on our society. Again thank you for your time.

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TESTIMONY OF

PETER LYNN
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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND INSURANCE
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THURSDAY, MAY 17, 2018

Members of the subcommittee, good afternoon. I am Peter Lynn, Executive Director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on the homelessness crisis currently unfolding in many of our cities, towns, and rural communities.

LAHSA is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles, administering federal, state and local homeless assistance programs, including prevention, outreach, shelter, and permanent housing programs through short-term and long-term rental assistance for youth, families and single adults experiencing homelessness. We also coordinate other homeless assistance with our partners, public and private, through LA's Coordinated Entry System. Our jurisdiction covers densely urban areas like the City of Los Angeles, suburban communities like those in the San Gabriel Valley, and rural communities in the Antelope Valley.

Los Angeles faces one of America's most serious homelessness crises. Last year, Los Angeles County found almost 58,000 people homeless on any given night, a rise of 23% - 11,000 people - over 2016. This despite the fact that we had housed more than 14,000 people out of homelessness in 2016, a 30% improvement on our housing numbers from the year before, and 61% increase from two years prior. Even as we improve our ability to house people, we have not been able keep pace with inflow.

The great majority of homeless people in LA are unsheltered, living in vehicles, tents and makeshift dwellings. Proliferation of visible encampments are a source of community friction, but have also generated tremendous compassion and willingness of Angelenos to

vote new resources into place. LA County residents voted to tax themselves – twice – last year to house the homeless: Measure H, a ¼ cent sales tax that will generate more than $355 million in services funding annually, and the City of LA added Proposition HHH, a bond measure for capital to construct thousands of desperately needed permanent supportive housing units.

Homelessness in LA did not arise overnight or over a few years, but is a result of many policy choices we have made, both federally and at the local level. Homelessness is a complex challenge, requiring many collaborative approaches to addressing the needs of homeless people, but first, and foremost, homelessness is a crisis of housing affordability.

LA has one of the nation's least affordable rental markets, according to the Harvard Joint Center on Housing Studies State of the Nation's Housing study in 2017, which found we have more than 700,000 severely rent-burdened households. Among them are more than 300,000 households making less than $20,000 that spend more than half their household income on rent. At that level of economic insecurity, one financial challenge - a car accident, an unexpected medical bill, or a few lost hours at work – can be enough to push a family into homelessness. With an overall rental market vacancy rate less than 4% in Los Angeles County, these households are hard-pressed to find affordable replacement housing.

Incomes are not keeping pace with rents. California Housing Partnership found that while inflation adjusted median rents had risen over 32% between 2000 and 2015, median renter incomes had actually fallen 3%. Over this period, funding for affordable housing construction and preservation has declined. Between 2009 and 2016, federal funding for affordable housing in Los Angeles County declined by 35%, while state funding sources, such as California's redevelopment agencies, were eliminated. Both the state and local jurisdictions have worked over the past three years to establish new sources of affordable housing funding, including the City of Los Angeles' new affordable housing linkage fee and the State of California's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program, but we have not bridged the gap, or made up for lost development.

When we survey newly homeless people, economic factors emerge as the leading driver: 53% reported that economic factors were the main driver of their entry into homelessness. 20% reported a disabling health condition as the main factor. Those that report economic conditions cite evictions, rising rents, unemployment, and foreclosures as the primary cause.

Beyond the immediate crisis of rising rents and the failure of affordable housing programs to keep pace, we must grapple with historical inequities, both regionally and nationally.

At a regional level, California was disadvantaged by historical funding formulas for key federal housing programs. The Community Development Block Grant program, for example, created a funding formula that privileged areas with older housing stock, leading to California and Western states receiving proportionally less funding than states in the East and Midwest.

Nationally, our decades-long history of overincarceration and under-funding of ex-offender re-entry services has left hundreds of thousands of Americans with significant barriers as they seek to restore themselves to a productive life. Federal and local policymakers have played a role in erecting these barriers.

According to 2017 Homeless Count data from Los Angeles, 63% of unsheltered adults have at some point been involved in the criminal justice system. Formerly incarcerated people struggle to re-enter the job market, and to access housing, either market rate or that is subsidized by federal and local sources of funding. They often face homelessness because of these challenges.

Our history of mass incarceration also helps explain the severe disproportionate racial demographics of people who are homeless, both locally and nationally. Law enforcement is not demographically neutral. In Los Angeles, African-Americans make up 8% of the general population, and 30% of our county jail population. Last year, 40% of those experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County were Black or African American; five times the representation in LA's general population. This is a legacy we need to address directly and vigorously.

The question that faces Los Angeles, and the rest of the country, is how to move forward, how to ensure homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

We must provide robust funding for affordable housing, at the workforce level and for those of very low income, and for people experiencing homelessness. The most recent omnibus passed by Congress was a strong step in that direction, as were the recent changes to allow income averaging in Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) developments.

We need to focus our homeless resources on effective programs, programs that work, using the best available data to make decisions. This is one of the reasons we believe the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) plays a critical role nationally. We need to learn from best practices around the country and ensure that communities nationally have access to the best information about what is working. USICH is uniquely positioned to aggregate and share that information. USICH also plays a key role in coordination for our federal partners, who, despite their best intentions, have not always proved the best at

coordinating themselves without the USICH. For these reasons, we strongly support H.R.5393.

We also believe that continuing to lower barriers to housing for people experiencing homelessness is of paramount importance. Reducing the standards for criminal background checks in federally subsidized housing would assist in this effort, as would support for communities in re-entry programming. In addition to helping directly to house people experiencing homelessness, it would make our communities safer by reducing the likelihood that formerly incarcerated homeless people recidivate.

Additionally, we must recognize the crisis of affordability we now face and avoid policies that tend to exacerbate that challenge. As such, we view elements of the Making Affordable Housing Work Act (MAHWA) with great concern and believe it could lead to more entries into homelessness and more economic strain on the families and households that can least afford it.

We urge the sub-committee to study the potential benefits from successful federal collaborations. The HUD-VASH program, which pairs HUD rental subsidies with VA case management services, has produced immense benefits and highlights the positive impacts that can be achieved by inter-agency collaboration. We ask that you consider similar collaborations, such as pairing workforce development funding from the Department of Labor with Rapid Re-Housing programming at HUD, or pairing efforts from the Health and Human Services Administration with supportive housing programs, or connecting Department of Justice Re-entry funding with HUD housing programs. We believe each of these could yield tremendous benefits, both directly and by facilitating the innovation and cross-sector collaboration that is critical to addressing homelessness.

Finally, I would like to extend to the subcommittee our invitation to visit Los Angeles, should the subcommittee seek field hearings around the country. The Los Angeles community would welcome the opportunity to share our experience, lessons learned, and challenges.

I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony and thank you for your leadership and attention to this critical issue.

National Alliance to
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TESTIMONY OF

NAN ROMAN
PRESIDENT AND CEO
NATIONAL ALLIANCE TO END HOMELESSNESS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND INSURANCE
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 17, 2018

Introduction

Chairman Duffy, Ranking Member Cleaver, and Members of the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, I am Nan Roman, President and CEO of the National Alliance to End Homelessness (Alliance). I am honored that you have invited the Alliance to testify before you today on the subject of homelessness.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, mission-driven organization committed to preventing and ending homelessness in the United States. It was founded in 1983 by a group of national leaders from both parties, deeply disturbed by the appearance of thousands of Americans living on the streets of our nation. In its early years it focused on meeting the emergency and service needs of this emerging population. Soon, however, as it became apparent that emergency measures would not solve the problem, we turned our attention to more permanent solutions. Today, the bipartisan Alliance Board of Directors and our thousands of nonprofit, faith-based, private and public sector partners across the country devote ourselves to the affordable housing, access to services, and livable incomes that will end homelessness.

Homelessness

I am pleased to report to you that from 2007 to 2016, homelessness declined in our nation (in 2017 it increased by less than 1 percent). Homelessness has declined among all

subpopulations, including individuals, families with children, veterans, and people who are chronically homeless (we do not have an adequate baseline on youth). How did this happen, despite the headwinds of increasing rents and poor households' declining incomes? It happened because of strong, outcome-focused federal support, including most notably via the McKinney Vento homeless assistance programs; and improving strategies and practice at the local level.

Progress has been made, but there is a long way to go. Over 550,000 people are homeless in our nation every night – over 1.5 million per year. This is unnecessary, as the history of the McKinney Vento homeless assistance programs indicates that we know what to do to end it. It should be our goal to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Achieving that goal is within our ability as a nation.

I am so happy to be before the Subcommittee on Housing because housing is the driver in the crisis of homelessness. After all, people become homeless when they lose housing. And people who have a home are not homeless. While we all have needs beyond a place to live, it is difficult to think of how we could meet those needs WITHOUT a home. How could we feed ourselves without a home, hold a job, or raise our children? If we are ill, how can we expect to get better without a home? You, here in this Subcommittee, do not control everything a person needs from their federal government to help them end their homelessness. Medical care, job training, education, substance abuse treatment and other services are in the purview of other Subcommittees. But you do have something to say about their housing. And of course you also have something to say about the homeless programs that hopefully help people ultimately return to housing.

HUD McKinney Vento Act Programs Performance

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's homeless assistance programs, as administered across six Administrations and fifteen Congresses, both Democrat and Republican, have been effective and successful. They focus on helping the most vulnerable people, support evidence based interventions, are outcome-oriented, and are ever-improving.

The HUD homeless assistance programs support a crisis system. They are designed to help address people's immediate crisis, end their homelessness, stabilize them, get them into a home, and connect them to the supports in the community that can help them achieve well-being. They succeed because they know what they can and cannot do.

Because HUD is a housing agency, and because homelessness is – by definition – a housing problem, the HUD homeless programs focus on housing. People do need services and some services are funded through the McKinney Act programs at HUD. But HUD is not really a good services funder, and more comprehensive services are better funded by partner agencies such as the US Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor and VA – and of course by local service agencies and organizations.

The Alliance believes that the HUD homeless assistance programs are well designed and although under-funded relative to the need, grantees continually seek ways to improve their effectiveness and their outcomes. HUD, in turn, continuously adjusts the program to support more and more effective solutions. In that regard, I want to recognize the extremely talented local leaders who join me on the panel today. They do the incredibly hard work of braiding together federal, state, local, not to mention corporate, philanthropic and individual funding to support complicated services and housing interventions for poor people. They are also, with their thousands of nonprofit colleagues from across the nation, always seeking way to improve their performance and help more people with the funding that is available. The innovation and the outcomes come from them, so I thank them for that. There are few human service sectors I know that have this level of commitment to continuously improving their outcomes. HUD has been smart enough to learn from organizations like theirs, and adjust accordingly.

I want to also quickly mention that Congress has required communities to collect administrative data on homelessness for some years now, and that they also collect point in time data. Programs therefore have data to measure their own effectiveness, communities can assess what is working, and the federal government can measure the progress that is being made using federal funds. Not every community uses data productively, but the Special Needs Assistance Programs Office at HUD (SNAPS, which administers the homeless programs) certainly does, and I think this is another important feature of the program.

Recommendations for Improvement

Is the McKinney Vento program at HUD perfect? Certainly there are improvements that could be made.

Some requirements of the program have become unnecessarily complex and time-consuming. It could simplify some application and reporting requirements, which are a burden on applying communities, especially those that are smaller.

The programs are designed primarily for urban areas, which presents some challenges for rural areas. Despite this, homelessness has been going down faster in rural than in urban areas (with the caveat that the point in time counts that assess these numbers are much harder to conduct in rural areas, and most certainly some people are missed). In rural areas (Balance of State and statewide) homelessness went down nearly 30% between 2012 and 2017. During the same period, it went down 12% in the country overall, and 7% in non-rural areas, or cities and suburbs.

Although fundamentally driven by the same issues, homelessness may play out differently in rural areas. Every rural community does not have its own full range of homeless programs – street outreach, shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, etc. People may have to travel long distances to find conventional homelessness programs. And because there are not so many homeless facilities, people who find themselves homeless in rural communities may move around, live in outdoor buildings, stay in campers, etc.

On the other hand, in most rural communities the number of homeless people is small, making the problem more manageable and giving these communities certain advantages when it comes to solving it. With adequate flexibility, rural Continuums of Care (CoCs) could be more surgical in their interventions. They could solve for the actual problem each individual or family has, instead of just giving everyone the same thing that everyone else gets. Funds could be used to more directly house people who are homeless or at risk.

Far flung and smaller rural communities do not require the same complex systems that large, compact urban ones do. They need more flexibility to address individuals and households one-by-one and to capitalize on existing resources rather than build new bureaucracies. The Subcommittee might wish to consider: allowing rural communities to provide short-term emergency lodging assistance, including in motels; flexible funding for things like car repairs; incentive payments to host households; and encouragement to counties to combine homeless and mainstream funding.

US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)

The HUD McKinney Act programs can address people's housing needs, but to meet their service needs around health care, employment, children's issues and so on, other funding partners must be engaged. HUD funding constitutes around half of the federal government's homeless-specific investment. The remainder comes from other agencies – the US Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Veterans Affairs are the most significant. In addition, both HUD and these other agencies can help with so-called mainstream resources not specifically targeted to homelessness, but still available to meet the needs of vulnerable households for health care, disability income, children's services, youth services, employment services, housing, and so on. The HUD SNAPS Office does partner with these agencies and services, but cross-sector collaboration and coordination is time consuming and sometimes difficult. This is where the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness comes in.

USICH helps the relevant federal agencies, as well as the White House and the Office of Management and Budget, coordinate. It also connects the federal agencies with state and local entities. It shares information widely across the federal government and communities to improve performance up and down the spectrum. It does this effectively and – with a budget of $3.6 million per year – efficiently. It seems to the Alliance that $3.6 million is a modest sum to invest in coordinating $5 billion in targeted resources controlled by multiple federal departments and agencies, not to mention hundreds of local communities. The impact of USICH's work can be seen in the improving practice around the country and in the homelessness outcome data.

The only recommendation of the Alliance with respect to USICH is to continue its authorization (which could be done through support for HR 5393, the Working Together to End Homelessness Act of 2018) and encourage its outcome focus and coordination role.

Homeless Subpopulations – Strategies in Place

There are a number of homeless subpopulations for which there is a relatively clear path forward toward solutions – understanding that fundamentally people who have a home are not homeless.

We know that permanent supportive housing ends homelessness for chronically homeless people (those with disabilities who are homeless for long periods of time or repeatedly). Chronic homelessness has been cut by more than half through this solution. But because of poor targeting in previous years, and because many residents experience recovery, some of the existing permanent supportive housing is occupied by people who could do well with less intensive and expensive assistance. HUD should be encouraged to do more to target turnover vouchers to those who currently occupy permanent supportive housing, but who could be stabilized with only a Housing Choice Voucher. This would free permanent supportive housing to be used for chronically homeless people, as indicated by evidence.

People in families with children primarily need to return quickly to housing and be connected to support services in the community. Nonprofits that wish to support these vulnerable families with services should be encouraged to provide those services to people who are housed, as the impacts will be greater. Rapid re-housing, while not as impactful as a housing voucher, does work well for many families that are homeless, is extremely cost effective, and should be expanded.

Veteran homelessness has been reduced by nearly half in the past few years, and HUD and VA have done a good job of coordinating to achieve this success. The HUD-VASH vouchers that HUD provides for permanent supportive housing are key to this success. VA provides the needed services. HUD also does assist many veterans who either do not qualify for VA services, or who do not connect with the VA.

For all of these populations, the Subcommittee is urged to continue to reinforce HUD's push toward outcomes.

Homeless Subpopulations – Improved Strategies Emerging

Homeless youth and young adults are a population upon which HUD has begun to focus more concentrated attention. Through its short-term 100-Day Challenges technical assistance initiative, the Homeless Youth Demonstration Program, and supportive changes in the Continuum of Care, HUD is doing more to support vulnerable youth. HUD is properly focused most on the housing needs of youth. Rapid re-housing is an example of a housing intervention that seems to be working very well with youth and young adults. HUD can also effectively support local systems that deliver both housing and, through partners, services. The Youth Demonstration Grants will yield good systems models. Considerable resources have been put into demonstrations and new approaches to ending homelessness for youth and young adults through the HUD Continuums of Care. It will be important to ascertain the outcomes of these initiatives as they emerge.

Youth homelessness is closely associated with placement in foster care. At least 25 percent of youth exiting foster care become homeless at some point, and possibly many more. Providing youth leaving foster care with a housing voucher holds promise of virtually eliminating this phenomenon. The Alliance supports giving youth leaving foster care a voucher, which is one of the provisions of the Fostering Stable Housing Opportunities Act (HR 2069). It would be more effective to do this systematically with incremental vouchers, rather than through the voucher turnover process as the Act proposes. The Alliance also supports helping young people exiting foster care to obtain and retain jobs or to finish their educations. While many young people will readily achieve these goals on their own, those most vulnerable to homelessness – such as those with no incomes or incomplete early educations – will require help to do so. Unfortunately, the Act does not offer that help, but rather, through work and education requirements, proposes to punish youth who fail to achieve these goals with the loss of their homes. This approach will make the program ineffective at preventing homelessness. The tremendously successful HUD-VASH program provides a good model for a program that could prevent foster youth from becoming homeless. It has systematically built a supply of incremental HUD vouchers for eligible veterans, and every voucher is matched with VA-funded services. A similar model might be created for foster. The Family Unification Program model, possibly linked with HUD's Family Self-Sufficiency program, is another option.

A population for which a clear, solution-oriented approach has not been articulated is homeless individuals[1] (those not living in family groups). This is the largest group of homeless people (67 percent of the population). It is the group most likely to be unsheltered (48 percent, versus 9 percent of people in families). It is a group where African Americans are likely to be over-represented (African Americans are 36 percent of all homeless individuals, but only 12 percent of the US population). While 71 percent of homeless individuals are male, there are also many women in this group (29 percent).

Despite being a significant, and visible, homeless subpopulation, the strategy for ending the homelessness of individuals is arguably the least articulated. The group typically receives shelter, at best. Unless someone is disabled, very few other services or housing opportunities are available. HUD is focusing more on the unsheltered portion of this population. Much improved and enhanced crisis shelter assistance is needed for this group – shelter that is decent and low-barrier, and that is focused from the time someone enters on helping that person get employment, get connected to any needed services in the community, and exit to permanent housing.

The Role of Housing

[1] Chronically homeless individuals and veterans, who are included in the statistics for this population, do have clearly articulated solutions strategies.

The HUD homeless assistance programs have indeed had their successes. But this may not continue. This year, for the first time in a decade, the number of people experiencing homelessness on a given night went up – if only slightly. This may be a harbinger of things to come. Across the country, rents are increasingly beyond the ability of extremely low income people to pay them. Housing instability is increasing. Evictions are rising. More people will become homeless if this continues. The housing interventions that are the solution to homelessness – rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing and Housing Choice vouchers – cannot be utilized because there is simply no housing to rent. Our nation has not always had widespread homelessness, and modern homelessness has always seemed a solvable problem. However, if something does not happen to change the equation on housing affordability, this may cease to be the case. This would be not only tragic, but costly – economically, socially, and morally.

Funding

The HUD homeless assistance programs are effective, efficient, and have been helping communities to reduce the number of homeless people despite the headwinds of rising rents and diminishing incomes for poor people. Nevertheless, last year on a given night, 35 percent of all those who were homeless – nearly 200,000 people – were completely unsheltered. They could not even get a bed in an emergency shelter. Communities across the nation, and providers such as those you have invited to speak to you today, know what to do to help these people end their homelessness. They use every penny the federal government gives them as strategically and wisely as possible. They match it, probably many times over, with private sector, philanthropic and individual donations, not to mention local and state funds. But it is not enough.

It is a disgrace that a nation with the resources of the United States should have nearly 200,000 people sleeping outside every night. The federal government has a critical role to play in solving the problem, and it has shown that it can play that role very effectively. The HUD homeless assistance programs need more resources, adequate to ensure that no American has to live on the streets.

Closing

The HUD McKinney Vento homeless assistance programs have done an admirable job of helping people who lose their housing to get back home. They have done this successfully for three key reasons. First is the tremendous commitment and ingenuity of on-the-ground programs that have continually innovated and focused on outcomes. Second, on the local public and private sector entities that have taken individual programs and formed them into systems that can, again, increase effectiveness and efficiency by allocating resources as strategically as possible – giving those with the highest needs the most intensive assistance, and those who need less a lighter touch. And finally, credit goes to HUD which has learned from these local programs and

jurisdictions, and from data and research, and constantly adjusted its programs to improve outcomes.

Speaking for an organization whose mission – to end homelessness -- is stated in its name, we thank this Subcommittee for your support of the HUD McKinney Vento homeless assistance programs; your support of adequate funding for the program; your vigilance that it achieve outcomes; and your willingness to back the Department when it has made hard, but necessary, decisions in order to improve the programs' impacts.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the National Alliance to End Homelessness, thank you for inviting me to testify before you and for your on-going support of the HUD homeless assistance programs.

Summary of Recommendations

Continue --

- Help to the most vulnerable people, support of evidence-based practices, outcome orientation, and a focus on continuous improvement in HUD McKinney Vento Act programs.
- The focus of the homeless programs on short term crisis resolution and rapid job/housing placement
- Supporting HUD program changes that improve outcomes
- Data collection and analysis
- Authorization of USICH so it can coordinate federal agencies and different levels of government, and encourage outcomes
- Expand the use of rapid re-housing
- HUD's current definition of homelessness
- Support for proven interventions such as permanent supportive housing and rapid re-housing

Improve --

- Application and reporting requirements through simplification
- Flexibility for rural areas including short-term emergency lodging assistance, including in motels; flexible funding for things like car repairs; incentive payments to host households; and encouragement to counties to combine homeless and mainstream funding.
- HUD's use of turnover vouchers to support tenants who need rental assistance, but not permanent supportive housing, to "move on"
- Examination of outcomes from youth demonstrations and challenges to ascertain how to move forward

- Provision to youth exiting foster care of vouchers (preferably incremental) to prevent homelessness; and services to assist them to obtain and retain jobs and education (in the place of housing conditioned on work and education requirements)
- The approach to ending homelessness among individuals by clearly articulating a strategy that includes decent, low-barrier, housing/employment-focused shelter
- The supply of housing that is affordable to the lowest income people, and the availability of rental subsidy for those who need it
- The level of resources provided so that it is sufficient to end unsheltered homelessness and homelessness overall

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The Honorable Sean Duffy
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Housing and Insurance Subcommittee Hearing 05/17/2018

Dear Chairman Duffy,

My name is Becky Westerfelt, and I am the Executive Director of Huckleberry House in Columbus, Ohio. Huckleberry House provides services including shelter and transitional living housing to homeless and runaway youth. Thank you for this hearing to consider how we can best address homelessness. I wish you could spend a day at Huckleberry House to see the very real and life-changing results of programs supported by you and your colleagues.

So often the barriers youth face as they try to establish themselves are complicated interactions between poverty, abuse and mental health problems. For those of us who work with these young people, we understand that there are no quick fixes for any of those problems let alone how each of those issues exasperate the others. What we do know is that solutions must be persistent. Parents understand that trying and failing are important components to our children's success. The same is true for our country's vulnerable youth. We also understand that making an investment in our young people is money and time well-spent. I think we would all agree that interrupting someone's homeless career at 19 would be a key strategy if we are to see long-term solutions for homelessness in our country.

But there is something we could fix tomorrow that will remove one barrier – **the Student Rule of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit**. Currently, residents of housing funded by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) cannot be full-time students unless they meet certain exceptions. The exceptions are:

- There must be at least one household member who is not a full time student in the household in order to qualify for the tax credit program.
- A resident on TANF (temporary assistance for needy families)
- Single parents,
- People in re-training programs, or
- Has been in the foster care system within the past 6 years.

However, the student rule provides no exception for people who are currently or were recently homeless, including youth. Because of this, homeless youth may lose access to LIHTC housing if they go to school full-time. Alternatively, if they choose to attend school part-time in order to keep their LIHTC housing eligibility, these students may lose access to grants, loans, and scholarships that are limited to full-time students. One of the most critical skills, and a significant focus of the Huckleberry House, is that our youth achieve an education and break the generational cycle of homelessness. Forcing homeless youth to choose between school and housing is not in their best interest or ours.

H.R. 1661 corrects this problem. The student rule has very real and disheartening consequences. Two years ago we had two youth who were finishing our Transitional Living Program. Neither met the exemptions so had to choose between school and housing. Both were bright and hard-working. One chose school and went into a fair market apartment that she couldn't afford. She kept taking classes at the local community college, but lost her apartment to become homeless again. She hasn't finished school yet because she continues to be unstable in her housing which causes stress and uncertainty. Although she has worked through this entire process, she does not make enough to rent without LIHTC housing as an option. The other chose housing. He quit school and works several low-paying jobs. His dreams for his career have been supplanted by survival. He recently told me that he's losing hope for a better life. Both of these young people bear the weight of this policy.

Right now Huckleberry House is working with a developer to build permanent supportive housing using the LIHTC. Already we have begun to strategize about how to address the student rule. While it is true that some youth needing this housing will fall under the other exemptions, we are frustrated that a youth who was homeless might not qualify. This is not a "what if" situation. We work with youth right now who will not qualify for LIHTC housing. Our agency values education at every level of our organization. In fact our Board of Directors has its own scholarship program to support youth coming through our programs. We make this commitment because we know that finishing high school or having some post-high school education can make all the difference.

H.R. 1661 includes "an unaccompanied youth" or a "homeless child or youth" in the list of exceptions. This is a common sense change that will remove a needless barrier between a homeless youth and self-sufficiency. Please consider supporting and passing this important legislation. Every year that goes by without this change creates another group of homeless youth forced to choose between thriving or merely getting by. We can do better.

Sincerely,

Becky Westerfelt, MSW
Executive Director