

January 22, 2007

Members of Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

We are writing to urge you to prevent the serious harm to low-income people that will occur if FY 2007 funding for housing, child care, Head Start, and employment services is limited to FY 2006 levels in the joint resolution now before you. In addition, we urge that funding for the Census Bureau be sufficient to carry out its important work, which will require more than the FY 2006 level.

The undersigned organizations have a long history of work in support of adequate funding for health care, nutrition, education, housing, cash assistance, child care and early childhood education, jobs programs, and social services. We recognize that finishing out the current fiscal year at FY 2006 levels erodes those vital services by inflation, and that this comes on top of years of cuts totaling billions of dollars. We are looking forward to working with you on the FY 2008 budget to begin to reverse these serious declines. Still, we have come together to call your attention to a small number of programs where the damage in FY 2007 would be so severe, and the harm to vulnerable people so egregious, that it demands your immediate attention.

Low-Income Rental Housing and Homelessness Programs: Just in the Section 8 and Public Housing programs, close to 200,000 subsidized units will be lost, in some cases driving families out of their homes; elsewhere, already hopelessly long waiting lists will lengthen. The whole HUD budget has been hit very hard by FY 2006 funding levels. We highlight the following programs in which your action can prevent an extreme loss of rental units for people with nowhere else to turn:

- **Section 8 rental vouchers:** An increase of \$487 million over the FY 2006 level plus language making the use of vouchers more efficient by linking Public Housing Authority voucher costs to recent leasing and cost data would prevent the loss of 70,000 vouchers. Since 2004, there has already been a loss of 130,000 vouchers. Preventing this further loss is a matter of urgency.
- **Section 8 project-based units:** The loss of another 107,000 rental units in projects can be prevented with an increase of \$636 million over FY 2006 funding.
- **Public housing operating subsidies:** According to HUD, operating subsidies will be underfunded by 25 percent if the \$3.564 billion level is left unchanged, significantly exacerbating maintenance problems and contributing to a further loss of vitally needed units. An increase of approximately \$900 million would prevent this loss.
- **Homelessness Assistance Grants:** An additional \$185 million beyond the FY 2006 level would provide shelter for 14,000 homeless people who would otherwise remain homeless.

Child Care: 250,000 fewer children received child care assistance in FY 2005 than in FY 2000. Thousands more children could lose care help in FY 2007. Increasing child care funding over FY 2006 levels is critical if further erosion is to be prevented.

Head Start: Head Start's funding has been cut by 11 percent since 2002. As a result, Head Start centers across the nation have been forced to make cuts (in hours, transportation, and educational instruction) that threaten the quality of their programs. If Head Start were not to receive an increase in FY 2007, programs would have to make the difficult decision to reduce the number of children they are currently serving or make even more significant cuts to services. An increase in Head Start funding by \$234 million in FY 2007 would help to restore the one percent FY 2006 budget cut and allow programs to avoid having to make further cuts in either children or in the services they provide to low income children and their families.

Employment Services: State Employment Services grants provide unemployed workers with job search assistance, referrals to job openings, and other help in securing new employment. It serves more workers than any other employment program. These state grants have been cut by 16 percent from FY 2002 through FY 2006, taking inflation into account. An increase of \$36 million beyond the FY 2006 funding of \$716 million would prevent disproportionate harm to workers and employers in rural areas, trade-impacted workers and veterans, those for whom English is a second language, and low-skilled, minority, and long-term unemployed workers.

Census Bureau: Advocates and policymakers nationwide rely on many Census Bureau products to document poverty, lack of health insurance, housing needs, etc., including the decennial census, American Community Survey, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), American Housing Survey, and Current Population Survey. The Census Bureau needs \$50 million more for FY 2007 to protect the accuracy of the 2010 census. FY 2007 funding should also be adequate to prevent cutbacks in the Census Bureau's other surveys.

Struggling working families, children, seniors, and people with disabilities have borne the brunt of backwards priorities in the federal budget. We come together to strongly urge you to make the above investments to prevent further hardships. It is in your power to do so at a modest cost.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Friends Service Committee

The Arc of the United States

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)

Campaign for America's Future

Children's Defense Fund

Child Welfare League of America

Coalition on Human Needs

CODEPINK: Women for Peace
Emergency Campaign for America's Priorities
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Legal Momentum
Mennonite Central Committee, Washington Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
National Council of Jewish Women
National Head Start Association
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
OMB Watch
Research Institute for Independent Living
RESULTS
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
United Cerebral Palsy
United for a Fair Economy
United for Peace and Justice
United States Student Association
USAction
Voices for America's Children
Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition
YWCA USA