



January 21, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer,

On behalf of the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), the Public Housing Authority Directors Association (PHADA), the Moving to Work (MTW) Collaborative (and the Local Housing Administrators Coalition) we are writing to voice our strong support to keep housing provisions in the Build Back Better Act or any related reconciliation vehicle. We thank you for your leadership and advocacy for these important affordable housing investments. The nation is in the middle of a housing crisis and retaining these direly needed resources in Build Back Better will help millions of families across the country.

We are particularly mindful of the critical need to provide funding for the Public Housing Capital Fund, which has been underfunded by Congress for over two decades. It is this lack of funding that has led to the deterioration of public housing across the country and the loss of 10,000–12,000 public housing units annually. In many cities and towns across the nation, seniors, veterans, persons with disabilities and families with children rely on public housing, now perhaps more than ever before. In some instances, no other source of housing could take its place more readily or affordably.

More than half of all households residing in public housing are persons of color, and this population has suffered disproportionately from the substandard condition in many public housing facilities. Making capital funding a priority will help address the disparate impact of deteriorated public housing on communities of color while providing additional decent, safe, and healthier homes to lower income households.

Addressing public housing capital needs also helps to address the health disparities in many communities, including communities of color and will result in reducing health risks. These risks include lead-based paint, mold, and allergy triggers such as rodent and insect infestation. A 2016 Brookings report found that substandard housing conditions disproportionately affect black families “...and lead to health problems such as asthma, lead poisoning, heart disease, and neurological disorders.”¹

An investment in public housing capital needs will spur local economic growth, as occurred with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). The Government Accountability Office found that 99.9% of all public housing ARRA capital funds were obligated and expended under accelerated

¹ Time for justice: Tackling race inequalities in health and housing, Dana Bowen Matthew, Edward Rodrigue, and Richard V. Reeves, October 2016.

time frames. With \$4 billion in capital funds, researchers found that agencies invested in over 245,000 affordable units, created 26 jobs for every \$1 million spent on capital projects, and generated nearly \$12.5 billion in national economic activity.²

Investing in public housing infrastructure would also address key areas related to climate change through reduced consumption of fossil fuels achieved by a variety of measures: more efficient HVAC, domestic hot water, and lighting systems; enhanced thermal barriers in building envelopes, including insulation and high efficiency windows and doors; increased utilization of non-carbon energy sources including solar, geo-thermal and wind; and energy efficient appliances.

In addition to Public Housing, Build Back Better's funding for Section 8 programs, including both the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCV) and Project-based Rental Assistance (PBRA) is a fundamental requirement to improve the state of our nation's housing. The funding for the HCV program would supply much-needed vouchers for this oversubscribed program. The bill also includes funding for mobility services, which help program participants to live in high opportunity areas, which, in turn, would increase the lifetime earnings for children.³ New project-based rental assistance would also help alleviate housing supply constraints that our nation is facing.

By supporting Public Housing and Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, you affirm the importance of investing in our nation's infrastructure and social safety net, providing families with stable, safe, and healthy homes while assisting them with opportunities for upward mobility. Across the United States, public housing provides almost 1 million units of housing to over 1.8 million people, including 800,000 children, and more than half the population in public housing is elderly and disabled. The 2.3 million Section 8 housing choice vouchers house an additional 5.2 million people including 2.2 million children.

We urge you to make this transformational investment in the lives of low-income and vulnerable Americans and in our communities. Preserve the housing provisions, particularly the Public Housing Capital Fund, in Build Back Better or related reconciliation bills.

Sincerely,

Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA)
National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO)
Public Housing Authorities Directors Association (PHADA)
MTW Collaborative
Local Housing Administrators Coalition

² Public Housing Stimulus Funding: A Report on the Economic Impact of Recovery Act Capital Improvements, Commissioned by PHADA, CLPHA and NAHRO with funding from the Housing Authority Insurance (HAI) Group, 2011.

³ See Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, and Lawrence F. Katz, "The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment," August 2015, http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/images/mto_paper.pdf.