

February 8, 2021

The Honorable Nancy P. Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
U.S Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

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

We are writing to urge you to include desperately needed relief to struggling homeowners in the COVID-19 relief package before Congress. Specifically, we request that it include \$25 billion for direct assistance to homeowners with COVID-19 hardships, who disproportionately represent communities of color hurt most by the pandemic, with the bulk of the funds deployed through state housing finance agencies through the Homeowner Assistance Fund and including at least \$100 million for housing counseling and \$39.7 million for the Fair Housing Initiatives Program.

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic crisis are devastating homeowners, particularly in communities of color which have not yet recovered from the 2008 Great Recession. While CARES Act and COVID-related forbearance by servicers has provided breathing room for many homeowners, this assistance does not cover those whose homes are at risk due to tax foreclosure, past-due homeowner association fees and other threats to home retention. The Mortgage Bankers Association reports that there are currently 3.8 million homeowners who are past due on their mortgages. Over half of these homeowners are people of color, according to Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey data for the period January 6-18. Black and Hispanic mortgage holders were more than twice as likely as white homeowners to report being late on their mortgage.

Mortgage payment assistance will be critically important to the nearly 3 million borrowers that remain in long-term forbearance plans from their mortgage servicers. While forbearance provides a temporary bridge for borrowers experiencing hardships, exiting long-term forbearance will be a challenge for those borrowers whose incomes have not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Recent homebuyers that relied on low- or no-down payment loans from FHA, VA or the Rural Housing Service are at particular risk, as even six months of forbearance can put borrowers underwater on their mortgages, owing more than their home is worth. Moreover, these borrowers are predominantly Black and Latinx families, first-time buyers and low- to moderate-income families.¹

¹ For example, according 2019 HMDA data, 41% of all mortgage originations for Black homeowners, and 39% of all loans to Hispanic borrowers, were backed by the FHA. Eighty-three percent of FHA loans went to first-time homebuyers, and 55% were for households earning less than \$75,000 (see FHA's 2020 Annual Report at <https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/2020FHAAnnualReportMMIFund.pdf>).

The Homeowner Assistance Fund, modeled on the Hardest Hit Fund created a decade ago, would enable state housing finance agencies to help homeowners with COVID-19 hardships, including providing direct assistance with mortgage payments, helping people get into affordable loan modifications, and assisting with utility payments, property tax and insurance payments, home owner association dues and other support to prevent the loss of home equity, mortgage delinquency, default, foreclosure, or loss of utility services. The Black homeownership rate today is as low as it was in 1968 when the Fair Housing Act was passed. We cannot begin to tackle the racial homeownership and wealth gaps if we do not take steps to prevent a wave of COVID-induced foreclosures and loss of home equity.

We also support additional funding for HUD-approved housing counseling agencies and legal assistance, as they both play essential roles in helping homeowners avoid foreclosure. HUD-approved housing counseling agencies play a critical role in ensuring homeowners get the individualized help and relief they need to stay in their homes, including through effective communication with their servicer and addressing credit and financial challenges as a result of the pandemic. As noted above, funding for Qualified Fair Housing Organizations and Qualified Fair Housing Enforcement Organizations must be prioritized. Fair housing groups are experiencing an uptick in cases since the onset of the pandemic, and additional funding would further protect vulnerable households experiencing housing-related dislocations

A critical lesson of the Great Recession is that the communities most impacted need targeted, early intervention. Acting now to include these key provisions in the pending COVID-19 relief package will help stem what could be a damaging housing crisis in the U.S. concentrated in low-income communities and communities of color.

Sincerely,

National Organizations

American Bankers Association
Americans for Financial Reform
Center for Community Progress
Center for Responsible Lending
Community Home Lenders Association
Community Housing Capital
Consumer Action
Consumer Credit and Budget Counseling, Inc d/b/a National Foundation for Debt Management
Consumer Federation of America
Credit Card Management Services, Inc.
Enterprise Community Partners
Faith and Community Empowerment (FACE)
Faith in Action
Framework Homeownership
Granite Housing Strategies, LLC
Guild Mortgage
Habitat for Humanity International
Hogar Hispano, Inc.

HomeFree-USA
Homeownership Alliance
Housing Assistance Council
Housing Partnership Network
Housing Policy Council
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Low Income Investment Fund
Money Management International
Mortgage Bankers Association
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
National Asian American Coalition
National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders
National Association of Consumer Advocates
National Association of Home Builders
National Association of REALTORS®
National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals
National Association of Real Estate Brokers
National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC)
National Community Renaissance
National Community Stabilization Trust
National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients)
National Council of State Housing Agencies
National Disaster Interfaith Network
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Foundation for Credit Counseling
National Housing Conference
National Housing Law Project
National Housing Resource Center
National Leased Housing Association
National NeighborWorks Association
National Organization for Women
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
Navicore Solutions
Prosperity Now
Public Counsel
Real Estate Services Providers Council, Inc. (RESPRO)
Rural Community Assistance Corporation
SKA Marin
The Elevated Studio
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
U.S. Mortgage Insurers
UnidosUS

State Organizations

Arkansas Community Organizations
Center for Fair Housing, Inc (AL)
Fair Housing Center of Northern Alabama
Mission Possible Community Services, Inc. (AL)
Mississippi County, Arkansas, Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc.
Southern Bancorp Community Partners (AR)
Administration of Resources and Choices (AZ)
Chicanos Por La Causa Housing Counseling Services (AZ)
Comite de Bien Estar (AZ)
Family Housing Resources (AZ)
Housing American Corp (AZ)
Housing Solutions of Northern Arizona, Inc.
Southwest Fair Housing Council (AZ)
Take Charge America, Inc. (AZ)
The Dunbar Coalition, Inc. (AZ)
Trellis (AZ)
Western Arizona Council of Governments
California Reinvestment Coalition
Community Housing Council (CA)
Community Housing Development Corporation (CA)
CSA San Diego County
Eden Council for Hope & Opportunity (ECHO Housing) (CA)
Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California
Fair Housing Council of Orange County (CA)
Fair Housing Council of Riverside County, Inc. (CA)
Greater Napa Valley Fair Housing Center (CA)
Haven Neighborhood Services (CA)
Housing Equality Law Project (HELP) (CA)
Institute on Aging (CA)
New Economics for Women (CA)
Project Sentinel (CA)
Public Law Center (CA)
Self-Help Enterprises (CA)
Springboard Nonprofit d/b/a Credit.org (CA)
Ubuntu Institute of Learning (CA)
Ventura County Community Development Corporation (CA)
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy, & Research Organization (CLLARO)
Denver Metro Fair Housing Center
Diversity Dynamics Consulting (CO)
LaMedichi (CO)
Mile High Connects (CO)
NeighborWorks Southern Colorado
Wheeler Advisory Group LLC (CO)

Young Invincibles (CO)
Connecticut Fair Housing Center
Haven Neighborhood Services (CT)
Central American Resource Center (DC)
Equal Rights Center (DC)
NCALL (DE)
Neighborhood House Inc (DE)
Affordable Homeownership Foundation, Inc. (FL)
CBO Support Network (FL)
Comprehensive Housing Resources (FL)
Consolidated Credit Solutions, Inc. (FL)
Credit Card Management Services, Inc. (FL)
Debthelper.com (FL)
Florida Alliance of Community Development Corporations, Inc.
Florida Housing Counselor Network
Graceful Solutions, Inc. (FL)
H.E.L.P. Community Development Corp. (FL)
Housing and Neighborhood Development Services of Central Florida, Inc. (HANDS)
Housing Counseling Consultant (FL)
Housing Development Corporation of SW Florida, Inc., d/b/a HELP
Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence, Inc. (FL)
Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, Inc. (FL)
Solita's House, Inc. (FL)
St. Johns Housing Partnership, Inc. (FL)
St. Petersburg Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc dba Neighborhood Home Solutions (FL)
Step Up Suncoast, inc. (FL)
Tampa Bay Community Development Corporation
Wealth Watchers Inc. (FL)
Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership
Catholic Charities Atlanta
GS Community Ventures (GA)
JCVision and Associates, Inc. (GA)
Metro Fair Housing Services, Inc. (GA)
Morningstar Urban Development Inc (GA)
New Georgia Project
Savannah-Chatham County Fair Housing Council, Inc. (GA)
Totally Free Inc (GA)
Hale Mahaolu (HI)
Hawaiian Community Assets, Inc.
Coasap (IA)
Intermountain Fair Housing Council, Inc. (ID)
Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago
AGORA Community Services (IL)
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council (IL)
Center for Changing Lives (IL)
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance

Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
Housing Action Illinois
Housing Choice Partners (IL)
Housing Opportunities & Maintenance for the Elderly (H.O.M.E.) (IL)
Lake County Housing Authority (IL)
Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago
Northside Community Resources - Chicago
Northwest Side Housing Center (IL)
Open Communities (IL)
ReBirth of Greater Roseland (IL)
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) of Illinois
South Suburban Housing Center (IL)
Woodstock Institute (IL)
Fair Housing Center of Central Indiana, Inc.
Habitat for Humanity of Lafayette (IN)
HomesteadCS (IN)
Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington, KY
Fahe (KY, Appalachia)
Frontier Housing, Inc. (KY)
New Directions Housing (KY)
REBOUND, Inc. (KY)
The Housing Partnership, Inc. (KY)
Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center
Greater Boston Legal Services, on behalf of its low-income clients
Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance
Massachusetts Communities Action Network
Massachusetts Fair Housing Center, Inc.
Springfield No One Leaves/Nadie Se Mude (MA)
Community Development Network of Maryland
Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Maryland and Delaware, Inc.
Garwyn Oaks Northwest Housing Resource Center (MD)
Housing Options & Planning Enterprises, Inc. (MD)
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MD)
Neighborhood Housing Services of Baltimore, Inc. (MD)
Public Justice Center (MD)
Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (ME)
Community Concepts Finance Corporation (ME)
Penquis CAP (ME)
Abayomi Community Development Corporation (MI)
Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit
Fair Housing Center of Southwest Michigan
Fair Housing Center of West Michigan
Habitat for Humanity of Michigan
Southwest Economic Solutions (MI)
Minnesota Homeownership Center
Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity

Greater Kansas City Housing Information Center (MO)
Metro St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council (MO)
NHS of Kansas City, Inc. (MO)
The Housing Partnership (MO)
Housing Education and Economic Development (MS)
Renaissance Community Loan Fund (MS)
Voice of Calvary Ministries (MS)
Montana Fair Housing, Inc.
National Affordable Housing Network (MT)
Centre for Homeownership & Economic Development Corporation, Inc. (NC)
Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy
Community Link Programs of Travelers Aid Society of Central Carolinas Inc (NC)
Family Service of the Piedmont (NC)
North Carolina Council of Churches
North Carolina Justice Center
OnTrack WNC Financial Education & Counseling (NC)
Pisgah Legal Services (NC)
Reinvestment Partners (NC)
High Plains Fair Housing Center (ND)
Credit Advisors Foundation (NE)
High Plains Community Development Corp. (NE)
Affordable Housing Alliance (NJ)
Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey
Housing Partnership for Morris County, Inc. (NJ)
New Jersey Citizen Action
New Jersey Community Capital
The Waterfront Project (NJ)
Homewise, Inc (NM)
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
Affordable Housing Partnership of the Capital Region (NY)
Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, Inc.
American Debt Resources, Inc. (NY)
Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (NY)
Belmont Housing Resources for WNY, Inc. (NY)
Bronx NHS CDC Inc.
Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project
Brooklyn Legal Services Corp. A
Brooklyn Neighborhood Services
Buffalo Urban League (NY)
CAMBA Legal Services Inc (NY)
CCCS of Buffalo (NY)
Center for Elder Law & Justice (NY)
Center for NYC Neighborhoods, Inc.
Central Islip Civic Council, Inc. (NY)
Chautauqua Home Rehabilitation and Improvement Corporation (NY)
Chhaya Community Development Corporation (NY)

Church of Good Deeds (NY)
Civic Association of Cypress Hills (NY)
CNY Fair Housing, Inc.
Coalition for Community Advancement: Progress for East New York
Consumer Justice for the Elderly Litigation Clinic, St. John's University School of Law (NY)
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (NY)
DC 37 Municipal Employees Legal Services (NY)
Doug Dylla Consulting (NY)
Emergency Shelter Network (NY)
Empire Justice Center (NY)
ERASE Racism (NY)
Fair Housing Justice Center Inc (NY)
Fifth Avenue Committee (NY)
Friends of the North Country, Inc. (NY)
Habitat for Humanity New York City
Habitat for Humanity of Tompkins and Cortland Counties (NY)
House of Good Deeds (NY)
Housing and Family Services of Greater New York
Housing Assistance Program of Essex County, Inc. (NY)
Hudson River Housing, Inc. (NY)
Human Development Services of Westchester, Inc. (NY)
JASA Legal Services for Elder Justice (NY)
Keuka Housing Council, Inc. (NY)
Legal Aid Society of Rockland County, Inc. (NY)
Long Island Housing Services, Inc. (NY)
Margert Community Corporation (NY)
Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens CDC (NY)
Neighborhood Restore HDFC (NY)
Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NY)
New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS)
New York Mortgage Coalition
New York State Council of Churches
New York VOAD (Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster)
NHS Brooklyn, CDC, Inc.
Northfield Community LDC of Staten Island, Inc. (NY)
PathStone Corporation (NY)
Putnam County Housing Corporation (NY)
Queens Volunteer Lawyers Project, Inc. (NY)
Rensselaer County Housing Resources, Inc. (NY)
Resurrection Sheepshead Bay (NY)
Rockaway Development & Revitalization Corporation (NY)
RUPCO, Inc. (NY)
Safeguard Credit Counseling Services, Inc. (NY)
Strycker's Bay Neighborhood Council (NY)
Supportive Housing Network of NY
The Bronx Neighborhood Housing Services

The Housing Council at PathStone (NY)
The Legal Project (NY)
Troy Rehabilitation and Improvement Program, Inc. (NY)
United Community Center of Westchester (NY)
Waterfront Alliance (NY)
Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc. (NY)
Western New York Law Center, Inc.
Workplace Project (NY)
CHN Housing Partners (OH)
Community Housing Solutions (OH)
Fair Housing Advocates Association (OH)
Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research (OH)
Fair Housing Contact Service, Inc. (OH)
Fair Housing Resource Center, Inc. (OH)
Home Repair Resource Center (OH)
Homes on the Hill CDC (OH)
Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Greater Cincinnati
Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio
Miami Valley Community Action Partnership (OH)
Miami Valley Fair Housing Center, Inc. (OH)
DevNW (OR)
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Proud Ground (OR)
Affordable Housing Centers of Pennsylvania
Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
Esperanza (PA)
Fair Housing Rights Center In Southeastern Pennsylvania
Housing Opportunities of Beaver County (PA)
Nueva Esperanza, Inc. (PA)
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Philadelphia Unemployment Project
Southwest Community Development Corporation
Foreclosure Prevention Legal Aid Clinic, University of Puerto Rico Law School
Instituto de Educación Practica-PR Bar Association (Puerto Rico)
Solo Por Hoy (Puerto Rico)
GROW South Dakota
Urban League - Tallahassee (TN)
Residential Resources, Inc. (TN)
Cooperative Processing Resources (TX)
Greater Houston Fair Housing Center, Inc.
Housing Opportunities of Fort Worth, Inc.
North Texas Fair Housing Center
Rockland Housing Action Coalition, Inc. (TX)
SouthFair Community Development Corporation (TX)
Texas Appleseed
Helping Overcome Poverty's Existence, Inc. (HOPE) (VA)

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia
Piedmont Housing Alliance (VA)
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Poverty Law Center
Downstreet Housing & Community Development (VT)
Lamoille Housing Partnership (VT)
NeighborWorks of Western Vermont
Association of Manufactured Home Owners (WA)
Catholic Charities Housing Services - Diocese of Yakima (WA)
Fair Housing Center of Washington
Northwest Fair Housing Alliance (WA)
Parkview Services (WA)
Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair Housing Council (WI)
HomeOwnership Center, Inc. (WV)
The Fairmont-Morgantown Housing Authority (WV)