

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 9, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Vice Chairman Leahy:

As you finalize appropriations bills for Fiscal Year 2020, we urge you to include robust funding for high-quality and affordable housing and child care programs, as well as initiatives to support a clean energy economy and combat the climate crisis. Healthy and stable housing and high-quality, affordable child care play an important role in setting up children and families for long-term success. Investments in our nation's families, in addition to programs designed to combat the climate crisis, will pay long-term benefits to our nation.

Last month, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019.¹ The deal suspends the debt limit for two years and lifts spending caps by \$320 billion. Earlier this year, the House of Representatives passed a set of appropriations bills that included an additional \$2.4 billion for child care, \$5.9 billion for HUD affordable housing programs, including \$1.2 billion for housing vouchers and nearly \$1 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and energy efficiency and renewable energy programs for Fiscal Year 2020.² We applaud these investments and are encouraged by the opportunity provided by the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019 to replicate these investments in the Senate appropriations bills and provide relief to America's most at-risk families.

Affordable, high-quality housing and child care are critical components of families' long-term economic stability and children's healthy development. Reliable and affordable housing improves the health of all residents and allows vulnerable families to achieve positive economic, educational, and health outcomes.³ Furthermore, overwhelming research has demonstrated the positive impact of quality child care on both the child and the family unit. It allows parents to have and retain jobs and provides children with the necessary environments for healthy cognitive development.⁴

¹ Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, Public Law 116-37.

² Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Defense, State, Foreign Operations, and Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2020, H.R. 2740, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2740>

³ The National Low Income Housing Coalition. "The Gap," March 2019, https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/Gap-Report_2019.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

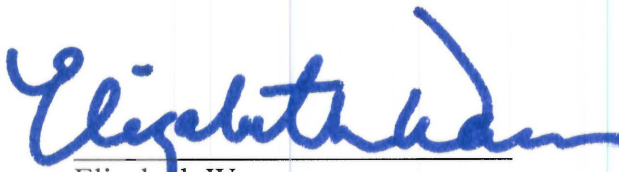
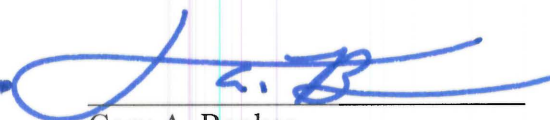
While housing and child care assistance represent the largest discretionary, non-entitlement programs for America's most vulnerable families, millions still struggle to gain access to and benefit from them. Due to chronic underfunding, three out of four low income households are denied federal assistance with their housing needs.⁵ Only one in six children eligible for child care assistance, and only one in five families with children eligible for housing assistance, ultimately end up receiving it.⁶ These issues are exacerbated by the shortage of more than 7.2 million affordable rental homes that America's most vulnerable so desperately need.⁷

American families and children deserve better, and Congress has an opportunity to make a positive impact on millions of lives through continued robust funding in programs such as the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG). To reverse the damage caused by years of underinvestment and build on recent investments in the program, we request that, at a minimum, an increase of \$5 billion in funding be appropriated for CCDBG, as well as an additional \$5.9 billion for affordable HUD housing initiatives in FY2020, including an increase of at least \$1.2 billion for housing vouchers.

Additionally, it is imperative that we, as a nation, make new and continued investments in programs to combat the existential threat of the climate crisis and its disproportionate impact on low-income communities and communities of color. Congress should target investments in clean energy transit systems, which will reduce emissions and improve air quality in communities across the country. To address this growing crisis for current and future generations, House Appropriators invested an additional \$672 million for the EPA as well as an additional \$273 million for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs for FY2020. We ask that these investments at these levels, at minimum, are included in the Senate's appropriations bills.

A budget is a statement of a nation's values. It is critically important we afford our nation's children and families every opportunity to succeed, and that we take meaningful steps to combat the effects of the climate crisis on our health, economy, and security. These investments will have countless long-term benefits to our nation, and we look forward to working with you to ensure they are included in the budget for Fiscal Year 2020.

Sincerely,


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

⁵ The National Low Income Housing Coalition. "The Gap," March 2019, https://reports.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/Gap-Report_2019.pdf

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

Mazie Hirono

Mazie Hirono
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Tina Smith

Tina Smith
United States Senator

Bob Casey, Jr.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator