

Funding for Youth Homelessness in Next COVID19 Package

Sending Office: Honorable Scott H. Peters
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Request for Signature(s)

Support Funding for Youth Homelessness in the Next COVID-19 Relief Package

Deadline: Noon on Tuesday, May 5

Dear Colleague,

As Congress continues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, I hope you will join me to call on leadership to include provisions to help homeless youth in the next COVID-19 package.

Given school closures and growing economic insecurity, youth experiencing homelessness are at increased risk. Service providers need more resources and flexibility to support them. In response, it's critical to appropriate more funding for Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), dedicating some of the funding for youth, and to Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs. Additionally, Congress should prohibit discrimination so all youth experiencing homelessness have access to services, and provide rental assistance to families to prevent youth from falling into homelessness.

If you have any questions or would like to sign on, please contact Baillee Brown at baillee.brown@mail.house.gov. Deadline is **noon on Tuesday, May 5**.

Sincerely,

SCOTT H. PETERS

LETTER TEXT:

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your leadership to provide historic relief in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* included necessary emergency funding for individuals experiencing homelessness, however, further funding and direction is vital to ensure that young people without stable homes are not overlooked during this public health crisis.

A Pew study released March 27, 2020 found that, "young people, in particular, are set to be disproportionately affected by virus-related layoffs... Younger workers make up 24% of employment in higher-risk industries overall, and many establishments in these industries are facing a high likelihood of closure in areas with more severe COVID-19 outbreaks." Youth homelessness service providers are already experiencing increased costs and challenges as they adapt to provide

stability for youth in transitional living and rapid re-housing situations, and make contingency plans to protect both uninfected and potentially infected young people.

As we consider targeted relief for the next supplemental package in response to COVID-19, we respectfully urge you to include dedicated funding for youth and young adults. Specifically, we recommend including the following resources in the next relief package:

- **An additional \$11.5 billion in HUD Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG), of which \$1 billion should be prioritized for youth services.** Communities that receive youth-specific funding should include youth and young adult involvement in developing and implementing their community-wide plan. The CARES Act provided significant waivers which accompanied the first \$4 billion for ESG. Providing local service providers with the following additional flexibilities, either through statute or regulation, will allow additional ESG funding to best be utilized to serve the needs of youth.
- **\$225 million for Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs at the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB).** This funding would allow for \$100,000 for each existing project, and to extend the award and performance period of all existing Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) projects by 12 months. RHY programs are the urgent response system when a youth or young adult finds themselves unaccompanied and homeless. Providers need stability and additional resources; applying for a competitive renewal will sap staff time and inject uncertainty into program planning.
- **Ensure that all COVID-19 response legislation include language prohibiting discrimination by recipients of federal funds on any basis other than need or eligibility,** such as (but not limited to) age, disability, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), race, color, national origin, or religion.
- **Reduce future youth homelessness.** Many young people are low-income and hourly workers who will be severely impacted by layoffs and reduced wages and the implosion of the gig economy. We recommend emergency rental assistance to ensure low-income youth and young adults who are currently stably housed can stay in their homes; implementation of a six-month cessation of youth aging out of the foster care system; and, access to flexible behavioral health services in shelters and remotely.

The coronavirus crisis has uprooted the lives of many Americans, and the most vulnerable feel its impacts most acutely. For many young people already experiencing homelessness or on the brink of homelessness, this pandemic will push them into crisis. We must provide additional resources for our most at-risk communities, particularly youth and young adults experiencing homelessness, or at risk of becoming homeless.