

NATIONAL RURAL HOUSING COALITION

April 19, 2023

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20150

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food, and Drug Administration, and
Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Hoeven,
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture,
Rural Development, Food, and Drug
Administration, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murray, Chairman Heinrich, Vice Chairwoman Collins, and Ranking Member Hoeven:

We write in support of appropriations for federal rural housing and water-sewer programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We urge the Committee to approve the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) USDA budget request for these programs. There is clear evidence that additional assistance is needed:

- According to US Census data, between 1999 and 2008, the average annual production of new single-family houses in non-metro areas totaled 221,000. From 2009 to 2017, average production fell to 68,000 per year.¹
- Rental housing, where it is available, often costs too much. According to a recent report by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, 41 percent (5 million households) of rural renters are cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs, and nearly half of all rural households (2.1 million) pay more than 50 percent of their income for housing.²
- Rural communities lack safe drinking water or adequate waste disposal facilities in the United States. Hundreds of thousands of rural families lack running water in their homes. More than two million Americans do not have access to safe drinking water and sanitation, including 1.4 million who lack access to indoor plumbing.³
- Years of declining investment in renovating existing and constructing new housing in our small towns and farming communities have resulted in a housing deficit. A recent Wall Street Journal article noted, "Fewer homes are being built per household than almost any other time in US history, and it is even worse in rural areas." As a result, in some rural communities, economic growth is impeded not by the lack of jobs but by the lack of housing for workers.⁴

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In its history, the rural housing programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have made housing opportunities available to millions of low-income families, financing over 2 million home mortgages and some 500,000 units of affordable rental housing.

However, over the last 20 years, rural housing assistance has slowed to a trickle. Budget cuts and inflation have taken their toll: USDA finances less than 7,000 mortgages annually for low and very low-income homeowners, does not provide any direct loans for new construction of affordable rental housing, does little in the way of preserving existing rental housing, and annually builds only about 200 units of housing for migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

The FY 24 USDA budget proposes modest increases to programs that will increase homeownership opportunities for low-income families, provide more families with the opportunity to build their own home, improve housing conditions for seniors, preserve essential rental housing, increase the availability of housing for agricultural workers, and improve water quality in small communities.

For these reasons, we urge the Committee to approve an appropriation for USDA rural housing and water and waste disposal appropriations along the lines of the FY 24 budget request.

Sincerely,

Organization Name	State
AFGE- Local 3354	OK
American Federation of Government Employees Local 3354	MO
Association of Alaska Housing Authorities	AK
Bayside Housing & Services	WA
Beaulac Associates LLC	NY
California Coalition for Rural Housing	CA
Casa of Oregon	CA
Catholic Charities Housing Services - Diocese of Yakima	WA
CDC of Brownsville	TX
Coachella Valley Housing Coalition	CA
Coastal Enterprises, Inc.	ME
Colorado Mountain Land Office	CO
Community Housing Improvement Program	CA
Andres Saavedra, Consultant	MD

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Delta Housing Development Corporation	MS
Enterprise Community Partners	CO
Fahe	KY
Florida Home Partnership	FL
Florida Non-Profit Housing, Inc.	FL
Frontier Housing, Inc.	KY
Greystone Affordable Development	NC
Guadalupe Economic Services Corp	TX
Habitat for Humanity International	DC
Harlingen CDC	TX
Homestead Community Development Corporation	HI
Housing Alliance Delaware	DE
Housing Assistance Council	DC
Housing Development Alliance	KY
Kathy Tyler, Consultant	TX
LIFT Community Action Agency	OK
Margaret Webster, Consultant	WA
McLoughlin & Associates LLC	WA
Milford Housing	DE
Minnesota Housing Partnership	MN
National Housing Law Project	CA
National Low Income Housing Coalition	DC
National Rural Housing Coalition	DC
National Rural Water Association	OK
NeighborGood Partners, Inc.	DE
NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley	RI
NeighborWorks Northeast Nebraska	NE
NeighborWorks Umpqua	OR
Northwest Regional Housing Authority	AK
Northwestern Regional Housing Authority	NC
NYS Rural Advocates	NY
Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing	WA
Olympic Housing Trust	WA
Partners for Rural Washington	WA
PathStone Corporation	NY
People's Self-Help Housing	CA
People's Self-Help Housing, Inc	KY
Peter Carey, Consultant	CA

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Pueblo of Jemez Housing Authority	NM
Rural Community Assistance Corporation	CA
Rural Local Initiatives Support Corporation	DC
SE RCAP	VA
Self-Help Enterprises	CA
Self-Help Homes	UT
Self-Help Housing Corporation of Hawaii	HI
Southeast Nonprofit Housing	NC
The Duncan Group	NY
The San Joaquin Valley Housing Collaborative	CA
Tierra Del Sol Housing Corporation	NM
Tunica County Community Development	MS

¹ United States Census Bureau. (2018). *Metropolitan Statistical Area Status for New Single-Family Houses Completed*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/construction/chars/pdf/metro.pdf>

² Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, "America's Rental Housing." 2017.
http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/harvard_jchs_americas_rental_housing_2017_0.pdf

³ Closing the Water Gap in the United States." *U.S. Water Alliance*.
http://uswateralliance.org/sites/uswateralliance.org/files/Closing%20the%20Water%20Access%20Gap%20in%20the%20United%20States_DIGITAL.pdf

⁴ Raice, Shayndi. "Rural America Has Jobs. Now It Just Needs Housing." *Wall Street Journal* May 30, 2018.
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/scarcity-of-housing-in-rural-america-drives-worker-shortage-1527672602>