

*We write in support of rural housing and rural development programs in the Fiscal Year 2025 Agriculture-Rural Development Appropriations bill. These important programs have the ability to improve housing opportunities in rural and Tribal communities across America.*

*Rural America is facing a shortage of affordable housing. Investment in the renovation of existing homes and construction of new housing has declined for years in our small towns and farming communities, and has resulted in a housing deficit. Rural communities across the country saw only a 1.7% increase in the number of housing units between 2010 and 2020 with almost half of states seeing a decrease in the number of rural units.*

*Rural, farming and Tribal communities not only lack affordable housing options, but most of the housing that is available, is substandard. A total of 1.4 million rural homes are substandard with many lacking the plumbing, heating, and electric systems necessary for safe habitation. Native American households living in Tribal areas are nearly five times more likely than the general population to reside in housing in poor physical condition.*

*The housing available in small communities is also too expensive for many low-income families. A report by the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, found that 38 percent of rural renters are cost-burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs, and 19 percent of rural renters households pay more than 50 percent of their income for housing.*

*Against this backdrop, federal rural housing programs have shrunk to the point that only about 3,500 direct loans are available for low-income families to purchase or build their own home, the lowest level since 1957. Funding to preserve rental and farm labor housing is meager by any standard and by no means adequate to provide new housing opportunities or preserve existing housing resources. In the coming years, the number of maturing Section 515 mortgages will only accelerate, resulting in an even worse state of rental housing in rural America as some rural communities' only source of affordable housing is lost.*

*For these reasons, we believe rural housing and rural development programs need robust congressional support. As the committee prepares its Fiscal Year 2025 agriculture appropriations bill, we urge you to provide funding increases for the following programs:*

- *\$1.585 billion for section 502 direct homeownership loans, including \$20.8 million for the Native American Relending Pilot Program;*
- *\$40 million for section 523 Mutual and Self-Help Housing;*
- *\$76 million for home repair through section 504 and section 533;*
- *\$200 million for Section 515 rural rental housing loans;*
- *\$90 million for multi-family preservation;*
- *\$1.69 billion for Section 521 rural rental assistance;*
- *\$68 million for farm labor housing loans and grants authorized under section 514 and 516;*
- *\$1.61 billion Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program loans and \$726 million in grants; and*
- *\$22.745 million for the Rural Community Development Initiative.*

*We appreciate the committee's past support of rural housing and development programs and consideration of this request.*