

July 20, 2009

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, HUD, and Related Agencies
133 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Christopher Bond
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, HUD, and Related Agencies
133 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Bond:

Safe and stable housing is critical to the education and well-being of the nation's children and youth. Therefore, the undersigned organizations urge you to provide funds for 200,000 Section 8 "incremental" tenant-based vouchers in the FY 2010 Transportation-HUD Appropriations Act.

The number of children and youth in need of secure housing is astounding. Prior to the recession, GAO reported that one out of six third graders had changed schools three times since first grade. The availability of affordable housing has declined significantly as a result of the decline in the economy, leaving large numbers of our children homeless. During the school year ending in 2008—prior to the worst of the recession—the Department of Education reported a 17 percent increase in the number of homeless students attending public schools. Further, this school year, one out of five school districts responding to a national survey enrolled the same number or more homeless students in the first few months of the school year as they enrolled during the entire previous school year.

Homelessness and excessive mobility have a detrimental impact on our young people. Research shows that highly mobile students are less likely to perform at grade level in math and reading than their peers. They are also more likely to repeat a grade, and less likely to graduate on time. The negative impacts of unstable housing are certainly not limited to classroom performance. Homeless young people are more likely than their stable peers to suffer from health, mental health, and behavioral problems as well.

Our nation has high hopes and expectations for the nation's children and youth. Stable housing is critical for them to achieve these goals. An increase of 200,000 incremental vouchers will not solve the nation's affordable housing shortage, but it provides a strong step toward ensuring that every young person will have the basic resources needed to succeed.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Excellent Education

American Association of School Administrators

American Humane Association

Camp Fire USA

Coalition for Community Schools

First Focus

Learning Disabilities Association of America

National Association for the Education of Homeless
Children and Youth

National Collaboration for Youth

National Network for Youth

National PTA

Public Education Network

School Social Work Association of America