

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 24, 2014

The Honorable Shaun Donovan
Secretary
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Secretary Donovan,

We commend the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for its commitment to preventing and ending homelessness. However, we are writing to express our serious concern about the allocation of appropriate housing and services resources for unaccompanied homeless youth.

According to HUD's 2013 Point-in-Time Estimate of Homelessness, over 45,000 unaccompanied youth experience homelessness on a given night. However, the 2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress indicates that HUD counted only 4,117 beds for child-only households, which includes beds funded by HUD, HHS, state and local governments and philanthropy. As noted in the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' 2012 amendment to *Opening Doors*, providing appropriate, relevant and readily accessible services is critical to addressing episodic or longer term homelessness among youth, and is an essential component of any housing intervention, including family reunification. Successfully addressing youth homelessness helps create self-sufficient young adults who can contribute positively to their communities. Significantly, it also reduces the numbers who become chronically homeless adults.

We strongly support the focus on chronic and veteran homelessness and believe it is vital to meet the goal to end chronic and veteran homelessness by 2015. But we also urge HUD to issue guidance to applicants for Continuum of Care (CoC) funds that directs them to distribute grants in a way that more broadly reflects the needs of the homeless community, including those of unaccompanied homeless youth. Because Notices of Funding Availability (NOFA) issued by HUD for CoC funds do not prioritize specialized services for youth and young adults, CoC applicants frequently omit youth-serving programs from their final proposals.

Sound data and effective evaluation are critical to improving the efficacy of programs assisting unaccompanied homeless youth. Thus, we urge HUD to include guidance in the CoC NOFA that strongly encourages applicants to include promising practices for identifying and documenting unaccompanied homeless youth, such as those identified in the Urban Institute's Youth Count! Process Study. We also urge HUD to set appropriate performance measures for youth programs, which often have goals that are distinct from those that serve chronically homeless adults and families.

Homelessness is on the rise for youth and young adults. The unique needs of this population means that adult models of homeless services are rarely youth appropriate or adequately intensive. We strongly encourage HUD to implement the suggestions in this letter as part of its efforts to eliminate youth homelessness by 2020. We appreciate your attention to this critical issue and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



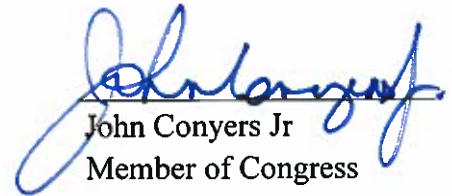
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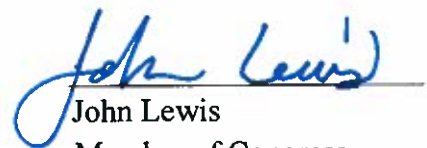
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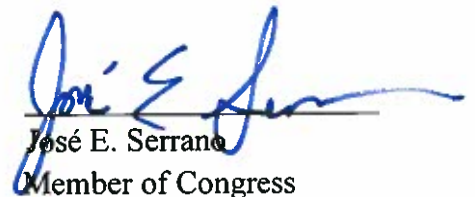
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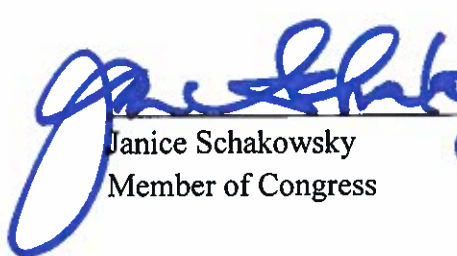
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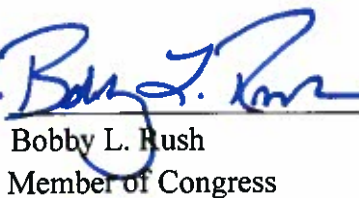
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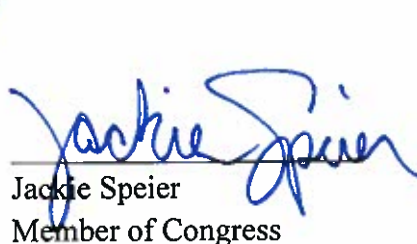
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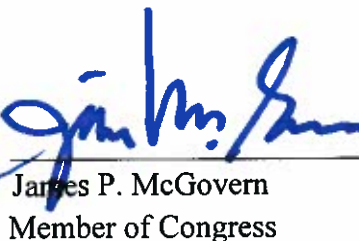
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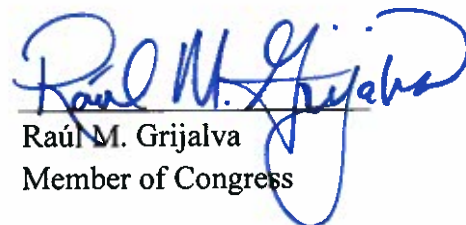
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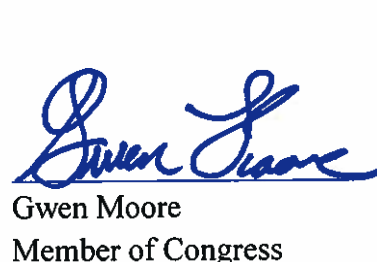
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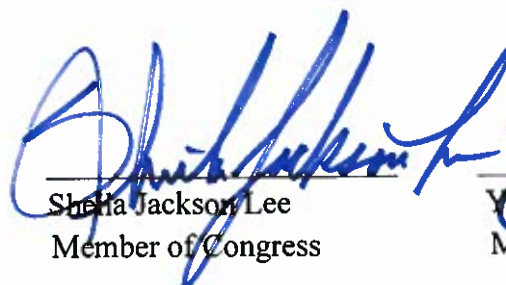
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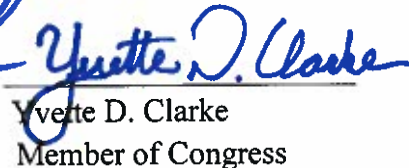
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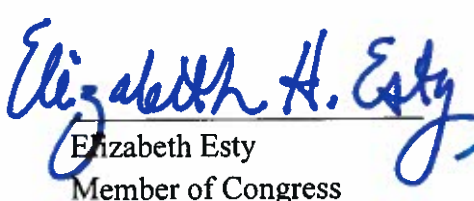
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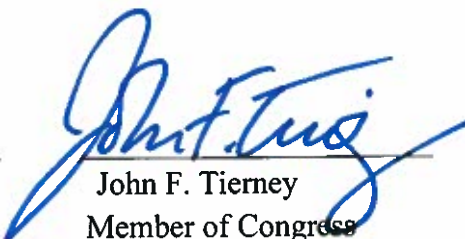
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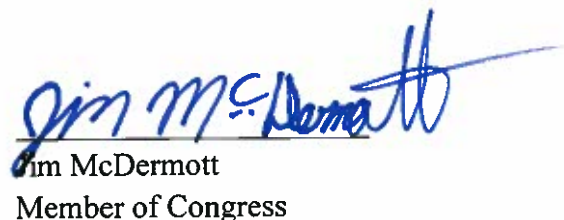
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