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The Honorable Maxine Waters
Chair, House Committee on Financial Services
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for H.R.1947, "Ensuring a Long-Term Housing Recovery Act" – A. Smith (WA-9)

Dear Chair Waters,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) Commission and the Los Angeles Continuum of Care (LA CoC), we write in support of H.R.1947, a bill which would provide \$25 billion, to be distributed through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, to public housing agencies (PHAs) for Housing Choice Vouchers (HCVs) for all income-eligible individuals and families.

LAHSA is a joint-powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles and serves as the lead agency in the LA CoC. LAHSA is responsible for funding a significant portion of the interim housing, permanent housing, and supportive services for individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County. As such, we support legislation that recognizes that housing is the cornerstone to stability and well-being and ensures that all income-eligible households receive the housing assistance they require.

Past research has suggested that homelessness increases faster in communities that have high rates of rent burden when compared to communities where residents can afford their rent.¹ In Los Angeles County, prior to the pandemic, 88% of deeply low-income renters, 74% of extremely low-income renters, and 40% of very low-income renters were severely cost-burdened, meaning they were paying more than 50% of their household income on housing costs.² Los Angeles County is also currently home to over 66,000 people experiencing homelessness on a given night.³

While the housing and homelessness crisis is felt all across the country, it is particularly acute in high-cost areas, such as Los Angeles County, where homelessness is expected to increase as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased job loss, reduced wages, and increased health issues are some of the ways in which the pandemic has exacerbated, and will continue to exacerbate, the housing and affordability crisis in our country. Some studies have estimated that between 36,000 and 120,000 households in Los Angeles

¹ Homeless Policy Research Institute. (November 2020). "Rent Burden Housing Subsidy in California." University of Southern California.

² California Housing Partnership. (2020). *Los Angeles County Annual Affordable Housing Outcomes Report*.

³ Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. (2020). *Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count Results*.

County alone could enter homelessness as a result of COVID-related eviction.⁴ Furthermore, the life and death consequences of an eviction have also been exacerbated due to the health concerns of being unable to shelter-in-place properly. Now, more than ever, it is critical that Congress invest in large-scale housing resources for all income-eligible households.

While valuable investments have already been seen on the federal level in the forms of emergency rental assistance, homelessness assistance, and an eviction moratorium, these investments are largely short-term fixes to a crisis that has been building for decades. Nations who have been able to reduce housing instability are often associated with providing dedicated housing assistance to larger portions of the overall population. For example, in Scotland, housing resources and programs are made available to the broadest population of those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness⁵ which has resulted in overall reductions in homelessness throughout the country. However, currently in the United States, just one in four individuals eligible for a HCV receive one. H.R.1947 recognizes this and, as a result, offers a solution by robustly investing in the HCV program, a proven federal resource which has long-term, positive impacts for its participants.

HCVs have been proven to sharply reduce homelessness, lift people out of poverty, and provide families with economic mobility, which in turn can improve educational, developmental, and physical and mental health benefits.⁶ Additionally, a significant investment in HCVs can reduce racial disparities, by being able to reach more low-income families of color, as well as can reduce costs in other public programs. On top of that, increased HCVs help out renters and landlords alike, as well as help to build stability in families and promote economic recovery. Investing in the HCV program is also critical in ensuring an efficient and timely provision of assistance, as most PHAs already have the capacity and infrastructure in place to administer the additional HCVs.

This bill is the type of bold legislation that is needed at this moment, moving the country closer towards a reality of realizing the goal of housing as a human right. As the country grapples with and recovers from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must consider providing assistance to families and individuals now – not after they have already been evicted and become homeless. For these reasons, we ask for your support of H.R.1947, a bill which would provide long-term and targeted assistance to those who need it most.

Sincerely,



Wendy Greuel
Chair
LAHSA Commission



Heidi Marston
Executive Director
LAHSA

⁴ Blasi, G. (2020). *UD Day: Impending Evictions and Homelessness in Los Angeles*. UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy.

⁵ Tars, E. S. & Egleson, C. (2009). *Great Scot!: The Scottish Plan to End Homelessness and Lessons for the Housing Rights Movement in the United States*. Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy.

⁶ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (April 2021). "Policy Basics: The Housing Choice Voucher Program."