

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Financial Services
2129 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 28, 2019

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. President,

Your shamelessness knows no bounds. From day one of your presidency, you have attacked our democracy and now you have set your ire on the 550,000 Americans who on any given night experience homelessness. Given this deplorable track record, I demand that you provide additional information on your Administration's recent report, "The State of Homelessness in America,"¹ and your reported plans to unilaterally demolish homeless tent camps and relocate homeless individuals to federally-owned facilities.² As you know, homelessness in this country has reached crisis proportions and this effort would be one of the numerous cruel, unlawful, and unpatriotic actions you have taken during what will hopefully be a short-lived presidency.

To date, your Administration has taken several steps that would increase homelessness in this country, including: proposing to defund key HUD programs, proposing to impose steep rent increases on the lowest income HUD tenants, seeking to evict mixed-status immigrant families living in subsidized housing, increasing the barriers to emergency shelter for LGBTQ individuals experiencing homelessness, and weakening fair housing protections. Your Administration also has implemented cruel and inhumane child separation and detention practices as part of its immigration policies. In light of this record, I am concerned that these newly reported efforts around homelessness are an effort to reduce the appearance rather than the rate of homelessness at the expense of the human and civil rights of people experiencing homelessness.

Your Administration's report further stokes these concerns by providing an oversimplified and misleading narrative of why homelessness exists in this country and the policies that may be successful in reducing homelessness. For example, the report ignores years of sound research on the efficacy of the Housing First approach in favor of supporting "service participation requirements" that have been proven to act as barriers to not just housing, but also employment, sobriety, higher education, and any number of positive life outcomes.³ The report also draws erroneous conclusions about the impact of local "right to shelter" policies, suggests that punitive policing tactics are effective in reducing unsheltered homelessness, inflates the impact of regulations on the cost of housing, and minimizes the critical importance of federal programs that invest in housing and supportive services for people experiencing homelessness.

¹ The Council of Economic Advisers. Executive Office of the President. The State of Homelessness in America. September 2019.

² Washington Post. Tracy Jan, Jeff Stein, and Josh Dawsey. September 13, 2019. HUD Secretary Ben Carson and top Trump officials to visit California as White House ramps up homeless push.

³ Urban Institute. Heather Hahn et al. Navigating Work Requirements in Safety Net Programs. January 2019.

There are over 550,000 people experiencing homelessness in this country, and more than 36,000 people experiencing homelessness in the City of Los Angeles alone on any given night.⁴ I recognize that the homelessness crisis that our nation faces is a humanitarian issue, requiring evidence driven solutions that treat people experiencing homelessness with dignity and respect. That is why I have introduced H.R. 1856, the Ending Homelessness Act of 2019, to provide over \$13 billion in funding to comprehensively address the crisis.

While homelessness may not be the headline news story this week, it is a crisis that is currently devastating this country. Members of Congress, state and local officials, and the general public deserve to know about the details of your plan before any action is taken. Please respond to questions below about the details of your efforts on homelessness, particularly in my home state of California.

- What specifically does the Administration plan to do to address homelessness in this country, and in California in particular?
- What assurances can you provide that your plans will not violate the Constitution and federal civil rights laws?
- Does your plan include the renovation of government properties to serve as emergency shelters? If so, where will you obtain the funding to renovate and operate these facilities?
- Does your plan include a long-term strategy to permanently house individuals and families experiencing homelessness?
- Which entities and federal agencies do you expect will carry out this effort? Specifically, what role would the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) play in your effort?
- How do you plan to work with state and local officials and organizations?
- What is your position on my bill, H.R.1856, the Ending Homelessness Act of 2019?

Sincerely,



MAXINE WATERS

Chairwoman

cc: The Honorable Patrick McHenry, Ranking Member

⁴ Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority. 2019 Point in Time Count.