

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
Chair
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cindy Hyde-Smith
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Schatz and Ranking Member Hyde-Smith:

As Congress considers the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies appropriations bill, we urge you to support adequate funding levels for the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG) and for the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Veterans Affairs and Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program for tribes.

In the 117th Congress, more than \$73 billion in dedicated funding was secured for Native communities – the most in U.S. history.ⁱ This historic investment flowed through five landmark laws – the American Rescue Plan Act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, Inflation Reduction Act, and Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023.ⁱⁱ Because of this historic investment, tribes nearly doubled their housing investment and received historic investment in economic development and infrastructure.

Now is not the time to withdraw support. Tribal leaders have prioritized projects, invested in construction and are undertaking the first phase of many projects. They are relying on their traditional sources of funds, including the Indian Community Development Block Grant (ICDBG), to complete these projects and plan for the future. The program provides Native American and Alaska Native communities with grants to fund decent housing, community facilities and infrastructure, and economic development opportunities.

Despite these historic federal investments, too many communities have inadequate infrastructure, limited access to capital and substandard housing. Most recent estimates by HUD indicate that 40% of on-reservation housing is substandard compared to 6% outside of Indian Country, and nearly one-third of households experience overcrowding.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Fiscal Year 2023, the Subcommittee appropriated \$75,000,000 in funds to the ICDBG program. We respectfully request the Subcommittee fund the program again at \$75,000,000 in FY24 in line with the President's budget request.

The HUD-VASH program has been and continues to be highly successful in combating veteran homelessness. HUD's 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress (2022 AHAR) found that veterans experiencing homelessness had decreased by about 11% since 2020. As a result of efforts to reduce the number of veterans experiencing homelessness, there are now 40,238 fewer veterans experiencing homelessness than in 2009.^{iv} A 2017 report by HUD found that American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people were at high risk for many conditions that lead to and/or sustain homelessness, such as deep poverty and lack of access to housing subsidies.^v The 2022 AHAR found that 10,775 individuals experiencing homelessness identified as Native American – 4.6% of the total population of individuals experiencing homelessness. In 2022, Native Americans experienced an increase in unsheltered people experiencing homelessness of 4%. Native American individuals also comprised 4.6% of all veterans experiencing homelessness, about 620 individuals in 2022, which is a reduction of 1,082 from 2020, further demonstrating the program's success.

The Tribal HUD-VASH program successfully provides rental assistance and supportive services to Native American veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness living on or near a reservation or other Indian areas. While we understand the Tribal HUD-VASH voucher program has had a carryover year to year in the past, we believe the program must contain additional funds to ensure adequate funding remains for tribes. Therefore, we respectfully request the Subcommittee set aside \$5,000,000 for the program in FY24, consistent with the request made in President Biden's budget.

Adequate funding for Indian Community Development Block Grant program and Tribal HUD-VASH are critical to ensure that Indian Country has the funds it needs to build on successful initiatives and ensure no veteran experiences homelessness. Thank you for consideration of our request.


Sincerely,



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



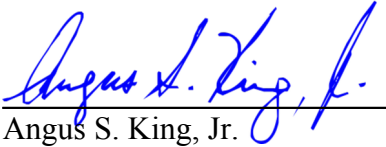
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



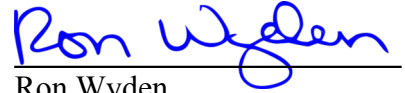
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



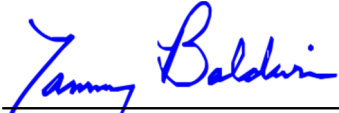
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



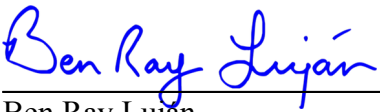
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



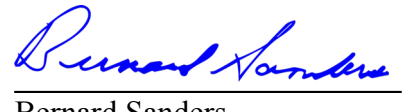
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



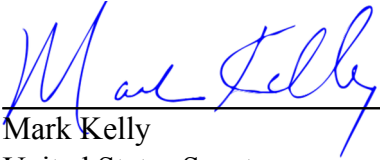
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



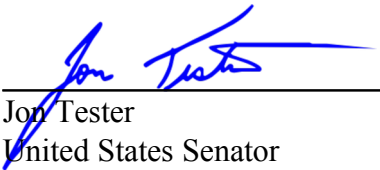
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Jon Tester
United States Senator

ⁱ Brian Schatz, “117th Congress Accomplishments - Indian.senate.gov,” 117th Congress Accomplishments (Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, 2022), <https://www.indian.senate.gov/sites/default/files/117th%20Congress%20SCIA%20Accomplishments.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ Brian Schatz, “117th Congress Accomplishments - Indian.senate.gov,” 117th Congress Accomplishments (Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, 2022), <https://www.indian.senate.gov/sites/default/files/117th%20Congress%20SCIA%20Accomplishments.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nicole Stern and Lisa I. Iezzoni, “Poor Housing Harms Health in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities,” Harvard Health, April 6, 2022, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/poor-housing-harms-health-in-american-indian-and-alaska-native-communities-202204062721>.

^{iv} Marcia Fudge, “HUD 2022 Annual Homeless Assessment Report,” HUD.gov / U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), December 19, 2022, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>.

^v Ben Carson, “Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas: A Report From the Assessment of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Needs,” Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas: A Report From the Assessment of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Needs (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2017), <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/HNAIHousingNeeds.pdf>.