Homelessness: Federal Policy

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Homelessness in the U.S.
• About half a million people in shelters and on the streets each night
• About three times that many spend some time in homeless programs each year
• Who’s overrepresented: people with extremely low incomes; Black, Native American, and Latinx people; people with disabilities; young children; LGBTQ
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Need two things to combat homelessness:

• A crisis response system to find people who are homeless, keep them safe, and get them quickly back into some kind of housing

• Progress on housing affordability more generally
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Key permanent housing interventions (the housing is permanent, although not necessarily the subsidy):

• “Diversion”
• Rapid Re-housing
• Permanent Supportive Housing
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HUD Programs:

• Continuum of Care; Emergency Solutions Grants - Homeless Assistance Grants appropriations account (CD connection)
• Housing programs generally
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• HUD Homeless Assistance
  – For FY19, $2.636 billion total
  – About $1.6 billion goes for already-existing permanent supportive housing
  – Effective intervention that achieves strong results
  – New funding for PSH now comes mostly from Housing Choice Vouchers
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Other Agency Programs:
• VA – HUD-VASH for PSH, SSVF for RRH
• HHS – Health Care for the Homeless, SAMHSA grants, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Medicaid, TANF)
• DoE – Education for Homeless Children and Youth
• DoL – Homeless Veterans Reintegration Project
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Biggest issue both for crisis response and for housing affordability: getting it funded closer to scale

• For crisis response, see Ending Homelessness Act of 2019 (HR 1856, Waters; S 2613, Harris) provides an extra $1 billion a year to CoCs for 5 years – about doubles the amount available beyond renewals of permanent subsidies

• For housing affordability, a number of major bills
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HUD Homeless Assistance Appropriations

• Current status:
  – The FY 2019 bill included $2.636 billion
  – House FY20: $2.8 billion (maintain existing capacity, DV initiative, youth initiative, small ESG increase)
  – Senate FY20: $2.761 billion (maintain existing capacity [?], DV initiative, youth initiative)

• Our FY 2020 ask: $3 billion (increase capacity in light of increasing numbers becoming homeless)
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Other important issues with advocacy payoff

• Other HUD programs
• SSVF spending
• HUD-VASH expansion – HR 2398
• Tribal CoC eligibility – HR 4029/S 2282
• Fostering Independence Act – HR 4300
• Protecting trans people in shelters – HR 3018
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