

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 15, 2020

Lynn Johnson
Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
330 C Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Elizabeth Darling
Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
330 C Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Assistant Secretary Johnson and Commissioner Darling:

As our nation continues to grapple with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), it is important to keep our most vulnerable populations at the forefront of our actions, especially the children, youth, and families who are at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. Children and youth have largely been overlooked in previous COVID-19 legislation, but the need for services continue to rise at an alarming rate.

The most recent data from The Department of Education reported a record number of 1.5 million children and youth in the school system who experienced homelessness during the 2017-2018 school year¹. An additional 1.4 million children under age six are estimated to have experienced homelessness. National research from the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall found that approximately 4.2 million youth ages 13-25 experienced homelessness on their own during a 12-month period.² While these numbers are alarming, the actual number of children and youth experiencing homelessness is severely undercounted. This population is at a greater risk of health complications, lack of educational resources, experiencing physical and emotional abuse, lack of proper

¹ <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Federal-Data-Summary-SY-15.16-to-17.18-Published-1.30.2020.pdf>

² Morton, M. H., A. Dworsky, and G. M. Samuels. 2017. Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America. National Estimates. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. [https:// voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf](https://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/VoYC-National-Estimates-Brief-Chapin-Hall-2017.pdf).

nutrition, and many other factors that contribute to an increased likelihood of experiencing homelessness as an adult.

As you may be aware, there is a bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation in both chambers of Congress that is intended to provide dedicated and critical support to children and youth experiencing homelessness. The *Emergency Family Stabilization Act* would address the complex and unique issues of children and youth experiencing homelessness by supporting community-based organizations working at the grassroots level with families and youth experiencing homelessness. Specifically, EFSA would assist children and youth with housing-related, health, education, and safety needs in an effort to secure and promote housing stability.

Please respond to the following questions as soon as possible:

Questions:

1. How has COVID-19 impacted families, children and youth who are at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness? What trends, if any, have emerged during COVID-19?
2. Does ACF have the necessary resources at this time to adequately support and respond to the ever-increasing needs of families, children and youth who are at-risk of or currently experiencing homelessness as exasperated by COVID-19, including emerging trends? If not, please detail the additional resources ACF needs at this time and the estimated cost of those resources..
3. If signed into law, does ACF have the capacity to implement the *Emergency Family Stabilization Act* as currently proposed?
4. Does ACF see a need for the *Emergency Family Stabilization Act* or similar legislation specifically designed to assist children and youth experiencing homelessness through ACF programs?

Thank you for taking the time to review this letter. We look forward to reviewing your response and continuing to work together to address children and youth homelessness.

With warmest regards,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator