

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2020

The Honorable Ben Carson
Secretary
Department of Housing and Urban Development
400 7th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20024

Robert R. Redfield, M.D.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329

The Honorable Alex M. Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Carson, Director Redfield, and Secretary Azar:

We write to seek clarification about what specific steps your agencies are taking to ensure the proper care of America's homeless population throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are aware that some updated guidance on this issue has been posted to your agencies' respective websites, this information does not directly address many of the concerns being expressed by homeless service providers on the ground. These are unprecedented times and your agencies are working diligently to respond to this outbreak, but it is imperative that we ensure the most vulnerable Americans are not forgotten by the federal government and receive its direct support.

Individuals experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to infection and complications from the spread of COVID-19. These individuals already lack ready access to hygiene facilities and permanent shelter, and many lack adequate health care. They are also generally an aging population, placing them directly in the higher risk groups for complications associated with COVID-19. Moreover, they possess greater barriers to follow public health guidance for dealing with this virus, such as washing their hands often, staying at home, and avoiding close physical interactions with others.

Therefore, we respectfully request answers from each agency to the following questions:

- What efforts are being made to coordinate directly with state and local entities to communicate the risk of COVID-19 to homeless individuals, as well as how to prevent

contracting and transmitting the virus?

- What are your agencies doing to assist local government and community nonprofit homeless service providers in making available hygienic services to homeless individuals?
- What guidance and resources are being provided to homeless individuals regarding self-isolation?
- What resources are your agencies directly providing to protect the health and safety of health care workers and community volunteers serving homeless individuals?
- What mental health services are being provided to homeless individuals?
- What steps are your agencies taking to ensure the safety of homeless individuals who have been discharged from medical care facilities in order to make room for COVID-19 treatment?
- What efforts are being made to coordinate directly with state and local entities to ensure that shelters serving homeless individuals have the food supplies that they need?
- What actions are your agencies taking to directly assist local government and community nonprofit homeless service providers that focus on serving homeless youth?

Specific to Secretary Carson, we also request answers about what steps the Department of Housing and Urban Development is taking to prevent homelessness among current residents and subsidized housing recipients, such as:

- What outreach is the agency conducting to inform current residents—many of whom may be experiencing a change in job status and an associated loss of income—of the need to update any changes regarding their income so they may potentially qualify for increased housing assistance?
- Is there an indefinite hold on PHAs issuing new vouchers to households?
- Is the agency currently conducting inspections for voucher holders who manage to lease up?
- Has the agency delayed the time limits associated with voucher lease-up?

Thank you for your attention to these matters. Given the urgency of this situation, we ask that you respond within two weeks from the date of this letter.

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress

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