

National Organizations Oppose Harmful Bill to Undermine Efforts to End Homelessness

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National organizations from the housing, disability rights, faith-based, and other sectors issued a [statement](#) opposing the “Housing Promotes Livelihood and Ultimate Success (PLUS) Act” ([H.R.3405](#)), which was reintroduced by Representative Andy Barr (R-KY) on May 17. The Housing PLUS Act would harm federal, state, and local efforts to end homelessness by undermining the ability to prioritize evidence-based solutions and diverting scarce resources to outdated, ineffective, and costly strategies.

Under current law, HUD is required to use the best available evidence to prioritize proven solutions to address homelessness, allowing the department to adjust its policy in response to new research findings. The Housing PLUS Act undermines HUD’s ability to focus on evidence-based solutions because it would create a rigid, arbitrary requirement to set aside 30% of federal homeless assistance funds for programs that evidence has shown are far less effective and more costly than the Housing First approach. In doing so, the bill could force local governments, through their Continuums of Care (CoCs), to defund existing programs that utilize a Housing First approach despite having demonstrated successful outcomes.

The statement explains that the Housing PLUS Act embraces a failed, costly, one-size-fits-all approach, known as the “stairstep” or “linear” model, that was used by the federal government in the 1980s and 1990s until federal policymakers demanded greater results and accountability. The [Housing First](#) model was developed in the early 1990s on a bipartisan basis as a direct response to the failures of the stairstep model that Representative Barr embraces in his bill. Decades of learning, [research](#), and bipartisan agreement consistently demonstrate that the most effective way to address homelessness and help individuals live stably in the community is to prioritize immediate access to permanent, affordable housing linked with voluntary supportive services such as substance use and mental health counseling. Research shows that once an individual is stably housed, they are much better able to voluntarily engage with services that help support housing stability, employment, and overall health.

While CoCs are successfully housing more households each year utilizing Housing First, homelessness is increasing in many places due to the lack of affordable housing, lack of accessible mental health and substance use treatment, and low wages that do not keep up with the cost of rent.

The statement calls on Congress to oppose efforts to divert federal resources to outdated, ineffective, and costly strategies, and instead expand investments in what works. To end homelessness once and for all, Congress should focus on long-term solutions to our nation’s affordable rental housing crisis, such as expanding rental assistance so that it is universally available to all eligible households, increasing investments to build and preserve homes affordable and accessible for people with the lowest incomes, creating new tools to prevent

homelessness and eviction, and strengthening renter protections. To help unhoused people live independently in their communities, Congress must increase funding for voluntary home- and community-based supportive services with proven effectiveness, such as supported housing, supported employment, Assertive Community Treatment, case management, and peer support services.