

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 23, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairman Womack, and Ranking Member Underwood:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) appropriations bill, I respectfully request that you include changes to a legacy general appropriations provision that limits certain college students from accessing critical housing assistance and supports, perhaps unintentionally, since FY 2006.¹ While the language was initially intended to prohibit paid student athletes from taking advantage of housing assistance needed to serve the lowest income households, the existing language is inadvertently locking low-income students who are experiencing homelessness out of stable housing opportunities.

Our nation's worsening affordable housing and homelessness crisis is affecting millions across the country, including a growing population of college students who are often forced to choose between taking on more student loan debt to pay for housing during their college years or falling into homelessness. The first-ever federal data on post-secondary students experiencing homelessness and food insecurity was conducted in 2019 and 2020 and found that more than 1.5 million college students in America are experiencing homelessness.² In the State of California alone, 1 in 5 community college students, 1 in 10 California State University students, and 1 in 20 University of California students are experiencing homelessness.³ Students experiencing homelessness and housing instability are more likely to be students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.⁴ Recent actions taken by the Trump Administration to eliminate the Department of Education, including assistance that helps the lowest income students, will worsen financial and social barriers faced by current college students.⁵ Moreover, the President's FY26 proposed budget cut of \$26.7 billion to rental assistance program, including stark reductions to Section 8, would place nearly 100,000 low-income students, comprising of 4.2% of voucher recipients, at greater risk of homelessness.

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition, [HUD Issues Final Section 8 Regulations Counting Non-tuition Stipends as Income](#) (Jan. 6, 2006).

² National Center for Education Statistics, [2019-20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study \(NPSAS:20\)](#) (Aug. 2023).

³ UCLA, [State of Crisis Dismantling Student Homelessness in California](#) (2020).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ NPR, [Trump signs order aiming to close the Education Department](#) (Mar. 20, 2025).

Currently, 45 million people owe \$1.75 trillion in cumulative private and federal student loan debt with the average borrower holding nearly \$30,000 in student debt.⁶ As the costs of post-secondary education continue to increase, the increased cost of living, including housing, is presenting greater barriers to educational attainment for college students.⁷ Like homeownership, education is also part of the American Dream that serves as a tool for socioeconomic mobility. When low-income students are disproportionately unable to meet one of their most basic needs like stable and affordable housing, it creates barriers to educational attainment and future employment opportunities that can set them up on a more stable path toward financial stability.

In 2004, college athletes received high-profile media attention for receiving housing stipends in addition to their sports scholarships while paying little or no rent through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program.⁸ In order to fix this loophole, Congress turned to the FY 2006 Appropriations bill and inserted Section 210 as a general provision, which limits college student eligibility for HCV assistance, and has been carried over in appropriations bills ever since with some modifications.

In accordance with the latest appropriations law and HUD regulations, the term “financial assistance” for the purposes of determining students’ income eligibility for HCVs includes forms of assistance designated under the Higher Education Act of 1965 that disproportionately help the lowest income students and students of color.⁹ This includes Pell Grants, Federal Supplement Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), Federal Work Study programs, as well as other forms of assistance that have been illegally eliminated by the Trump Administration, including the Academic Achievement Incentive Scholarships, State Assistance under the Leveraging Educational Assistance Partnership Program (LEAP), and the Robert G. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program.

As we work to solve the homelessness crisis, we must consider the distinctive needs and disparities that exist within the homeless population. Stable, fair, and affordable housing is central to ensuring that low-income students can succeed in their college journey and federal policy must not stand in the way. **Accordingly, I respectfully request that you include the following language as a general provision in the FY26 appropriations bill (amended based on general provision Sec. 210 of Division F, Title II of PL 118-42):**

“SEC. 210. (a) No assistance shall be provided under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f) to any individual who—

(1) is enrolled as a student at an institution of higher education (as defined under section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002));

(2) is under 24 years of age;

(3) is not a veteran;

(4) is unmarried;

(5) does not have a dependent child;

(6) is not a person with disabilities, as such term is defined in section 3(b)(3)(E) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)(3)(E)) and was not receiving assistance under such section 8 as of November 30, 2005;

(7) is not a youth who left foster care at age 14 or older and is at risk of becoming homeless; and

⁶ Forbes, [2024 Student Loan Debt Statistics: Average Student Loan Debt](#) (Apr. 18, 2024).

⁷ Bipartisan Policy Center, [Housing Insecurity and Homelessness Among College Students](#) (Aug. 15, 2023).

⁸ NPR, [HUD Loophole Aids College Athletes](#) (Jul. 23, 2004).

⁹ The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), [Eligibility of Independent Students for Assisted Housing Under Section 8 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937: Additional Supplementary Guidance](#) (Dec. 6, 2006); See also National Center for Education Statistics, [Percentage of full-time, full-year undergraduates receiving financial aid, and average annual amount received, by type and source of aid and selected student characteristics: Selected academic years, 1999-2000 through 2015-2016](#) (Accessed on Apr. 28, 2024).

(8) is not otherwise individually eligible, or has parents who, individually or jointly, are not eligible, to receive assistance under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f).

*(b) For purposes of determining the eligibility of a person to receive assistance under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437f), any **need-based** financial assistance that an individual from an institution of higher education (as defined under section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)) shall **not** be considered income to that individual”*

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Please contact Melissa Anoh with Ranking Member Waters at melissa.anoh@mail.house.gov with any questions about this letter.

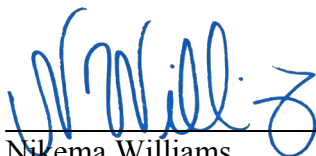
Sincerely,



Maxine Waters
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services



Al Green
Member of Congress



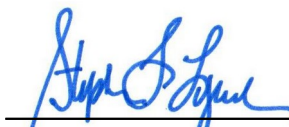
Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



André Carson
Member of Congress



Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



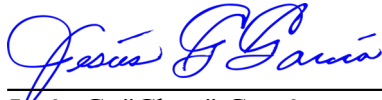
Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



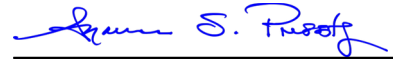
Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



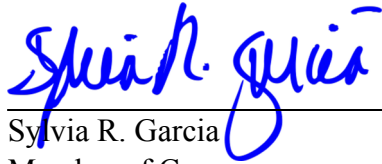
James P. McGovern
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



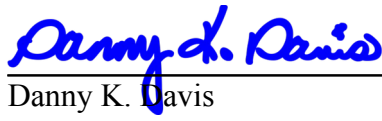
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



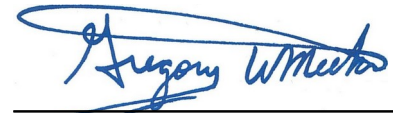
Sylvia R. García
Member of Congress



Stacey E. Plaskett
Member of Congress



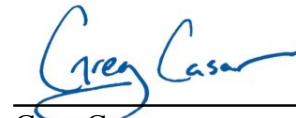
Danny K. Davis
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Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



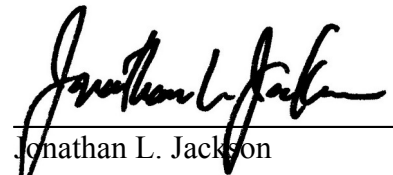
Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



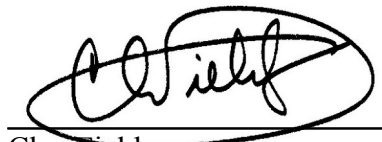
Jonathan L. Jackson
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Cleo Fields
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