

**Amendment to the Views and Estimates of the Committee on Financial Services
on Matters to be Set Forth in the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal
Year 2016.**

Offered by Mr. Cleaver of Missouri

Beginning on page [5] line [9] insert the following:

THE TREMENDOUS NEED FOR RENTAL AND HOMELESS ASSISTANCE

HUD's *Worst Case Housing Needs: 2015 Report to Congress* reports that in 2013, 7.7 million very low-income unassisted families paid more than half their monthly income for rent, lived in severely substandard housing, or both. Worst case needs affect all types of households, including 2.8 million families with children and 1.5 million elderly households¹. This is a problem that affects every state and nearly every community across our country, and was exacerbated as a result of the most recent housing crisis and economic recession. The report states that, "even with rental assistance, 6 of 10 extremely low-income renters and 3 of 10 very low-income renters do not have access to affordable and available housing units."²

Furthermore, HUD's January 2014 point-in-time count revealed that there were 578,424 people experiencing homelessness on any given night in the United States. It is precisely the scarcity of affordable and available housing in our country that is behind a homeless person's inability to acquire or maintain housing.

Finally, in 2012 the United States Department of Agriculture reported that 17.7 percent of our nation's population —approximately 8.5 million people—lived in rural poverty. A total of 6.6 percent of Americans experienced deep poverty (having cash income below half of one's poverty threshold), with rural children being disproportionately affected by the negative effects of poverty.

In the richest country in the world, it is unconscionable that there are millions of American families for whom safe and decent housing is neither affordable nor available. And while the private sector has played a critical role in funding and preserving affordable rental housing across the country, the free market is not the panacea to solving our nation's homeless and rental housing crises. Experience shows that the private market has not been eager to fill the need for rental units that are affordable, particularly for extremely and very low-income (ELI and VLI) households. In many cases, federal assistance is necessary to attract private players into this gap in affordable housing.

Further, failure of the federal government to play a role in affordable housing would end up being more costly to taxpayers. This is because a lack of access to housing would put

¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2015). *Worst Case Housing Needs: 2015 Report to Congress Executive Summary*, p. 2.

² *Ibid*, p. 2

millions more Americans at risk of homelessness, and data show that it is far more expensive for the federal government to allow chronic homelessness to persist, than it is to provide stable housing opportunities.

It is well established that housing serves as a platform for improving a person's quality of life, from the education and health outcomes of children, to seniors aging in place. Every individual, family, and child deserves access to a safe, secure, habitable, and affordable home. It is the government's obligation to ensure that everyone can exercise their human right to live in safety and with dignity. As such, federal funding for rental and homeless assistance programs must be fully funded in order to both cut government spending, and to continue to serve our nation's most vulnerable populations, including veterans, seniors, and persons with disabilities.