

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Financial Services
Washington, D.C. 20515

May 18, 2016

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
H-305, the Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
1065 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Ballart
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Price
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Diaz-Ballart, and Ranking Member Price:

As you consider the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) appropriations bill, I strongly urge you to repeal the sunset date for the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), which is October 1, 2017. Our country has made important strides towards ending homelessness in this country under USICH's leadership, but we have a lot more work to do if we want to continue to make progress. In Los Angeles and in other major metropolitan areas across the country, homelessness has been increasing, and I am very concerned that the loss of this critical agency would seriously set us back in our ability to address the challenges that we face.

As you know, Congress established USICH in 2009, directing it to develop a National Strategic Plan to End Homelessness, and to update it annually. Thus, USICH put forth *Opening Doors* in 2010, which is the nation's first comprehensive federal strategy to prevent and end homelessness. This was a deliberate effort on the part of Congress to *end* homelessness in America, not merely to decrease homelessness in America. The loss of USICH before we meet the goal of ending homelessness in America would send the message that we are not serious about meeting these goals, and that we have accepted homelessness as a permanent fixture here in the richest country in the world. I, for one, have not conceded that point, and continue to believe that ending homelessness should be a top priority for Congress.

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USICH plays an indispensable role in our ability to reach the goal of ending homelessness in America. The Council is made up of the heads of 19 different federal agencies and offices, and it has a strong track record of fostering successful interagency collaboration as well as local engagement. By focusing on data and performance measurement, USICH keeps all of the different programs and offices that serve the homeless working in sync with one another and fixed on the same set of goals and principles. For example, under USICH's leadership, veteran homelessness has decreased by 36 percent since 2010. Unfortunately, without a repeal or extension of its sunset date, the agency is already experiencing operational problems because it cannot offer health benefits for any newly hired employees (as they have noted in their Congressional Budget Justification in recent years).

In recognition of the need to prioritize homelessness and the importance of USICH, I introduced the Ending Homelessness Act of 2016 this Congress, which would permanently authorize the USICH and provide the necessary resources for several programs and initiatives in order to end homelessness in this country once and for all I urge you to make this a priority in the FY 2017 THUD appropriations bill and repeal the sunset date for this critical federal agency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maxine Waters". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

MAXINE WATERS
Ranking Member