**Policy/Advocacy Update – 10/3/2016**

**Federal Legislation Update:**

**FY2017 Appropriations – Continuing Resolution (CR) –**Congress passed a continuing resolution on Wednesday 9/28 to fund the government past the start of Fiscal Year 2017, through December 9th. The bill involves slight across the board cuts in order to comply with the Budget Control Act, but otherwise programs will continue to be funded at their current levels. After passing the CR, Congress plans to adjourn earlier than expected.

When Congress finally does take up appropriations, they will be working with the following numbers:

* **Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (Section 8)**: The Senate has proposed $18.36 billion, plus $11 million for a voucher mobility demonstration. The House has proposed $18.31 billion. The Administration budget proposed $18.45 billion. Administrative fees are below the Administration’s request of $2.08 billion, at $1.77 billion in the Senate and $1.65 billion in the House. No new vouchers would be funded under any of these proposals.
* **VASH:** $57 million for new vouchers in the Senate (of which $7 million is for tribal VASH). The House only included the $7 million for tribal VASH.
* **FUP:** $20 million for new vouchers in the Senate, targeted at youth aging out of foster care. $0 in the House. The Senate bill also included report language containing several provisions we have been pursuing, such as widening the age range to 14-24, extending the timeline to 36 months, and directing HUD and HHS to develop guidance and training materials to improve connections between housing and child welfare agencies, and remove barriers to access.
* **McKinney-Vento**: The Senate proposed $2.33 billion, which would cover renewals and the Youth Homelessness Demonstration described below. The House increased the Homeless Assistance Grants account by $157 million over the Senate’s number, for a total $2.487 billion allocation. We think that this is in recognition of the fact that, in the recent CoC funding round, HUD majorly shifted money toward high performing projects, which Republicans had been asking for. However, key districts lost funding in the reallocation, so the House targeted $40 million in ESG formula grant funding towards “communities that lost significant capacity.” Both of these are less than the Administration’s proposed $2.664 billion, which would have included funding for an additional 25,000 units of supportive housing to end chronic homelessness.
  + **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project**: $40 million in the Senate for testing strategies to end youth homelessness, out of a total Homeless Assistance Grants allocation of $2.33 million. $0 in the House. HUD recently released the first round of YHDP grants and CSH program staff are helping their communities develop proposals.
* **USICH Reauthorization:** The US Interagency Council on Homelessness sunsets in 2017. The Senate reauthorized it; the House did not. This is a key issue that will need to be worked out in conference.
* **HOME:** Both chambers matched the President’s request of $950 million, level with last year.
* **CDBG:**The House offered level funding from last year, $3.06 billion, and the Senate offered $3.0 billion, both greater than the President’s request of $2.88 billion.
* **SAMHSA mental health for the homeless programs:**$49 million increase to SAMHSA for opioids treatment, prevention, and overdose reversal and $30 million increase for the Mental Health Block Grant. Level funding for homeless programs.

**Fall 2016 Local Member Engagement Campaign (NAEH) -** Members of Congress are now home in their states and districts for the election season, returning to session Monday, November 14. This presents an excellent opportunity for a final push to increase McKinney spending by $237 million to $2.487 billion in FY 2017!

The $2.487 billion was in the House version of the T-HUD bill and represents the largest one-year increase for McKinney in 20 years! Now is the time to follow up with the housing staffers you met with and engage Members directly through our [Fall 2016 Local Member Engagement Campaign](http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/fall-2016-local-member-engagement-campaign) while they are home! Here’s what you can do:

* [Host a Member for a site visit!](http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/fall-2016-local-member-engagement-campaign)Hosting a Member of Congress for a site visit of your McKinney-funded program is the most effective thing you can do while they are home to engage them in the effort to end homelessness.
  + The *most important* members to engage are Members of the [House](http://appropriations.house.gov/about/members/transportationhud.htm) and [Senate](http://www.appropriations.senate.gov/subcommittees/transportation-housing-and-urban-development-and-related-agencies) T-HUD Appropriations Subcommittees, and Congressional Leadership.

**Make Room Campaign –** Make Room is a nationwide campaign aimed at bringing attention to and ending the rental affordability crisis in America. The campaign aims to give voice to struggling renters and elevate rental housing on the agendas of our nation’s leaders.

* + The National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and more than 400 organizations across the country have joined with Make Room to send 1 million messages to Congress to get housing affordability on the national agenda by Election Day.
  + Use Make Room’s first-of-its-kind online advocacy platform <https://1-million-messages.makeroomusa.org/> to tell Congress to act now!
  + Organizations can also join the Make Room campaign by signing onto a national letter to Congress and use Make Room’s advocacy toolkit to raise awareness locally.

**H.R. 4888: Ending Homelessness Act of 2016** – ***No new action/update.***Introduced on 3/23 by House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA). This legislation would provide $13.27 billion in new funding over five years to several programs and initiatives that would provide significant resources to end homelessness in America. These funds are in addition to the annual funding amounts for existing HUD programs.

**S.993/H.R.1854, The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act – *No new action/update.*** Introduced by Senators Franken (D-MN) - Cornyn (R-TX) and Representatives Collins (R-GA)-Scott (D-VA). The Comprehensive Justice and Mental Health Act (CJMHA) recently passed the Senate and the House Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support. It has beneficial provisions from the prospective of ending homelessness.  In Maine we have always seen a pattern where people with mental illness are swept into jails, as well as homeless shelters.  The people would be much better served and at far less cost in permanent supportive housing. The bill includes provisions around screening people who interact with the criminal justice system for mental health conditions and connecting them with services, at all points in the justice system from intake to transition.

**H.R. 3700, the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act (HOTMA)** – ***Enacted – Signed by the President on 7/29/16. HOPWA modernization was also included within the legislation.*** The Housing Opportunities Through Modernization Act, provides the first comprehensive update to the nation’s low-income housing programs in 18 years, will improve federal rental assistance programs while retaining the core characteristics that make them effective. HOTMA will help address homelessness by:

1. Allowing local housing agencies to make greater use of project-based vouchers to assist the homeless (as well as veterans, the elderly, and people with disabilities);
2. Revising the rules for inspecting units that families with tenant-based vouchers wish to rent in order to get vulnerable families into homes more quickly, while protecting them from eviction if subsidy payments to an owner are suspended because a unit has developed housing-quality violations; and
3. Strengthening voucher assistance for former foster children, a group that faces a high risk of homelessness.

**State Legislation Update:** The Legislature has adjourned Sine Die and will return in January 2017, unless an emergency session is called.