

Chairwoman Maxine Waters
House Committee on Financial Services
2129 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Waters:

The undersigned organizations are writing with support for the investment in housing proposed in your legislation, the Housing is Infrastructure Act. The affordable housing crisis in America is real, and bold solutions like this could improve housing opportunities while stimulating jobs. We thank you for your leadership in introducing this legislation, which recognizes the necessity of robust investments in affordable housing in our country. The bill proposes funding across a swath of Federal housing programs, which deliver assistance in a variety of ways including construction and renovation.

This legislation could better support residents of affordable and public housing by incorporating up-to-date minimum energy efficiency codes, as well as basic health and safety codes, for the funding of new construction and major renovations in the bill, and to ensure outcomes of reduced energy burdens on residents.

The benefits of resilient, high-performing, healthy housing are abundant. In particular, investment in energy efficient affordable housing can support residents in reduction of their utility bills, enhanced conditions to support health and wellness, and a greater sense of stability and community.

Utility bills add to the challenge of housing affordability. As reported by the Energy Information Administration's (EIA) Residential Energy Consumption Survey, 31% of U.S. households struggle to pay their energy bills or to adequately heat or cool their homes.¹ Social Security recipients pay almost 20% of their income on energy, while federal poverty aid recipients pay more than 25% of their income on energy bills. Energy efficient housing reduces this energy burden. For example, a study of energy efficient design and construction on LIHTC housing in Virginia found that residents saved an average of \$54 a month, or \$648 annually, on their electricity bills, representing up to three percent of their income.

Resilient, high-performing housing also supports healthier families across the country, reducing risks of mold and mold allergens which can cause or worsen asthma and respiratory health problems. For example, a comprehensive study by Oak Ridge National Laboratory documented and monetized eleven health-related non-energy benefits from the weatherization assistance program.² Providing significant value for households as well as society, these health benefits include avoided deaths from CO poisoning, fire, and thermal stress; avoided hospitalizations and emergency department visits including for asthma-

¹ ["Residential Energy Consumption Survey,"](#) U.S. Energy Information Administration.

² Tonn et al, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, [Health and Household-Related Benefits Attributable to the Weatherization Assistance Program](#) (2014). See also ["Health and Housing Outcomes From Green Renovation of Low-Income Housing in Washington, DC,"](#) National Library of Medicine, National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Institutes of Health, 2014 (a Washington, D.C. study of green certified low income housing renovations where self-reported general health in adults significantly improved from 59% to 67%; allergen dust loadings showed large and statistically significant reductions and were sustained at one year.).

related symptoms; increased ability to afford prescriptions; and disposable income gains from fewer missed days at work.

Homes should support their residents' health and wellness. In order to do so, homes should maintain high levels of safety, ventilation, temperature stability, moisture control³ – in essence, many of the key outcomes of today's building codes. However, state energy code requirements vary significantly across the country, with several states essentially having outdated or no energy code in place. Energy codes do more than ensure high levels of performance – they help protect residents from high utility costs and provide better conditions for health and quality of life. Federal funds for housing construction and renovation should ensure a consistent baseline level of performance of residential projects.

Targeted investment in housing has the power to improve and expand the national housing stock, to provide all residents with healthier homes. We welcome the chance to continue to work with you towards the bill's passage and to incorporate baseline energy efficiency. Please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth Beardsley (ebeardsley@usgbc.org, 202-595-3989) with any questions or if we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Alliance to Save Energy

American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE)

American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)

E4theFuture

Institute for Market Transformation

National Association of Energy Service Companies (NAESCO)

National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO)

U.S. Green Building Council

³ National Center for Healthy Housing, [“The Principles of a Healthy Home,”](#) accessed 2020.