



September 13, 2018

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chairman  
Senate T-HUD Subcommittee  
142 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart  
Chairman  
House T-HUD Subcommittee  
2358A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Senate T-HUD Subcommittee  
142 Senate Dirksen Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Price  
Ranking Member  
House T-HUD Subcommittee  
2358A Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Price,

As you deliberate the Fiscal Year 2019 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies conference report, I ask you to consider including important provisions on housing and infrastructure. BPC Action hopes any issues between the House and Senate bills can be resolved in a manner that can gain broad support and be signed by the president by the September 30 deadline.

We urge the House and Senate conferees to focus on these critical issues as they resolve differences between the bills, and that they adopt:

- The Senate aging in place home modification grant program. This program recognizes that the homes of far too many older Americans are physically unsuitable, lacking the supportive structural features necessary for those who wish to remain at home as they age. This program would support low-cost home modifications for low-income older adults, while encouraging HUD to track the program's effectiveness at reducing costly falls, hospitalizations, and emergency response calls. This provision will help enable older individuals to live more independently at home, as the majority of Americans prefer.
- The House family mobility demonstration. This program would provide \$50 million in support for low-income families to relocate to neighborhoods with lower poverty and greater access to high-quality schools, healthcare, jobs, and other resources. By providing

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families with housing vouchers and counseling, the program will help struggling families access economic opportunity. Research has shown that—particularly for young children—safe, adequate housing enhances overall wellbeing, boosts school performance, and improves mental and physical health outcomes. For additional information, visit: <https://bpcdc.org/2l8yOt2>.

- The Senate improvements to the collection of homelessness data. Data is integral to tailoring local responses to rising homelessness, as the Bipartisan Policy Center noted in its recent report: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/hud-hhs-partnerships-a-prescription-for-better-health/>. Importantly, the Senate bill directs HUD to incorporate additional federal data into its Annual Report on Homelessness (AHAR).
- The House and Senate directives on transportation regulatory reform. The Bipartisan Policy Center has written extensively on the benefits of streamlining and better coordinating federal infrastructure project permits and environmental reviews. Three provisions in the House and Senate bills would further this goal:
  - The Senate bill would direct the Federal Highway Administration to identify additional opportunities in which state, local, and tribal jurisdictions should have more autonomy in project delivery.
  - The Senate bill would direct the Federal Highway Administration to minimize the bureaucratic burden of qualifying an infrastructure project as a categorical exclusion in environmental reviews—a step that can speed up project delivery and reduce costs.
  - The House bill expressly provides funding for the permitting dashboard, an online tool that transparently tracks permitting requirements, review timelines, and federal agencies' responsibilities.
- Senate funding levels for the BUILD grant program. The Senate bill proposes to provide \$1 billion in funding for the BUILD—formerly TIGER—grant program, while the House bill includes \$750 million in funding. Though Congress should endeavor to encourage a higher level of transparency and rigor in the project selection process, the program is, nonetheless, a critical source of funding for nationally important infrastructure projects and should be given robust funding. For more information, visit: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/tiger-changes-its-stripes/>.
- The Senate bridge bundling provision. Bundling small projects together has multiple advantages. A bundled suite of projects can bring the necessary scale to attract private



sector investment, and bundling takes advantage of economies of scale to deliver cost savings. (For more information, visit: <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/putting-private-capital-to-work-in-rural-infrastructure/>.) The House bill directs DOT to prioritize BUILD grant applications that demonstrate cost savings by bundling multiple rural bridge projects into a single proposal. This program merits inclusion given its promise as a model for modernizing rural infrastructure. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/putting-private-capital-to-work-in-rural-infrastructure/>.) Consistent with the recommendations of BPC's Executive Council on Infrastructure, the House bill directs DOT to prioritize BUILD grant applications that demonstrate cost savings by bundling multiple rural bridge projects into a single proposal. This program merits inclusion given its promise as a model for modernizing rural infrastructure. <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/putting-private-capital-to-work-in-rural-infrastructure/>.)

Thank you for taking these important provisions into consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with you on these important issues and thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Stockwell".

Michele Stockwell  
Executive Director, BPC Action