Christians have a long history of assisting people without housing by providing shelter, caring for immediate needs, safeguarding their dignity and advocating for an end to homelessness and poverty. This concern reflects God's mandate to care for those who live on the margins of society, to show hospitality to strangers and to seek justice for the most vulnerable. We are also called to respond to the scandal of homelessness by creating the public will to address the factors that put people at risk, including the chronic lack of safe, affordable housing.

On a given night, by a conservative estimate, faith-based groups house more than 150,000 people in emergency shelters and transitional or permanent housing programs. But the growing affordable-housing crisis creates immense challenges for the many churches that are dedicated to helping communities flourish and grow. Recent reports from the Department of Housing and Urban Development indicate that **8.3 million extremely low-income households spent over half of their income on housing and did not receive any federal assistance in 2015.** In fact, only a quarter of the poorest households eligible receive any assistance. These structural challenges can trap people in poverty, leaving too many one paycheck away from eviction or even homelessness.

Shelter and affordable housing are more than simple commodities. A secure home is the foundation for people to build their lives and thrive. As unique stakeholders in the fight to end homelessness, people of faith can advocate for good policies that curb poverty by supporting:

HOMELESSNESS ASSISTANCE GRANTS McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants help fund local and state assistance programs across the country, offering communities the tools they need to provide outreach, shelter, supportive services and more for people experiencing homelessness.
We urge Congress to fully fund McKinney-Vento programs for $2.456 billion in FY2018.

LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP) Energy is a critical resource, and as the seasons turn, many low-income people struggle to keep the heat on in their homes. Programs such as LIHEAP give states the funding to help people with low incomes with the highest energy costs meet their heating and cooling needs.
We urge Congress to fully fund LIHEAP for $3.39 billion in FY2018.

TENANT-BASED RENTAL ASSISTANCE (TBRA) Rental assistance applied in innovative ways gives low-income people the funds they need to find affordable housing and is more fiscally efficient than emergency shelters. TBRA programs provide assistance to individuals to help them afford market-rate housing units.
We urge Congress to fully fund Tenant-Based Rental Assistance contracts for $21.365 billion in FY2018.

SENIOR HOUSING As the U.S. population ages, lack of affordable housing for seniors has become a critical issue for many on fixed incomes. Supportive Housing for the Elderly funds sponsors and nonprofits to develop and operate affordable senior housing.
We urge Congress to fully fund Section 202 Housing for the Elderly for $573 million in FY2018.

RURAL HOUSING ASSISTANCE Rural communities face some of the steepest housing challenges in the nation. Lack of development and renovation over decades has resulted in many hidden costs, from rapid physical deterioration, poor insulation, overcrowding and more.
We urge Congress to maintain all Section 521 Rental Assistance contracts for $1.405 billion in FY2018.

VETERANS HOUSING Homelessness among veterans has fallen by 47 percent since 2010, but it still remains a serious problem. The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) efficiently helps veterans connect with case-management and clinical services to help them secure housing and safety.
We urge Congress to appropriate HUD-VASH for $60 million in FY2018.

LEARN MORE ABOUT: *Faith-based organizations and homelessness*   *HUD's Worst Case Needs report*
                       Affordable housing stats in your area   *Trends in housing affordability*

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.