

Authorizing and FY 2019 Appropriations: USICH

Program Overview

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) is the only agency at the federal level with the sole responsibility of ending homelessness. It works across 19 federal agencies and departments, and with partners in both the public and private sectors, to improve federal spending outcomes for homelessness.

Reducing Bureaucracy: USICH cuts through federal bureaucracy and competing priorities to improve outcomes for homeless people:

- USICH plays a key role in aligning ongoing U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) efforts to reduce veteran homelessness. Since 2007, Veteran homelessness has decreased by more than 45 percent, and USICH has certified that more than 60 communities across more than 30 states have ended Veteran homelessness.
- USICH makes it possible to combine federal resources to more effectively end homelessness. For example, it has helped pair HUD-funded housing with Medicaid-funded services to deliver high quality permanent supportive housing. USICH continues to do the important work of bringing HUD and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services together to negotiate agreements, and they work with local communities to leverage this coordination.

Improving Efficiency: USICH's Regional Coordinators help local stakeholders across all 50 states use federal resources from different agencies to implement best practices and meet locally-determined needs. This has allowed more than 75 communities to leverage housing, health, education, and labor funding more strategically and effectively. USICH also works to ensure that information about federal programs is clear and easily accessible.

Proven Outcomes: USICH has helped drive national decreases in homelessness.

"The investment of a few million dollars to coordinate \$5 billion in targeted spending and billions more from mainstream programs across 19 federal agencies has worked. Despite strong headwinds in the form of increasing rents and stagnant incomes for poor people, homelessness has gone down. The Alliance strongly supports the continuation of USICH until the problem of homelessness in our nation is solved."

—Nan Roman, President and CEO, National Alliance to End Homelessness

Current Status

While USICH's annual budget is only a modest \$3.6 million, the agency is responsible for coordinating approximately \$5.5 billion in various funding streams. But, because the original legislation to establish USICH included a sunset date for the Council, continued funding for USICH is uncertain every year. Without legislation to permanently authorize USICH, this uncertainty will always jeopardize future progress to end homelessness.

Recommendation

It is essential that both chambers of Congress pass legislation to permanently authorize USICH. Currently, the House and Senate have introduced companion bills to accomplish this:

- The House has introduced H.R. 5393, The Working Together to End Homelessness Act of 2018, to Committee. The Alliance urges Congress to move this bill through Committee and schedule a vote in the House.
- The Senate companion bill is S. 743, A Bill to Strengthen the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and should follow a similar process in the Senate.
- Once either of these bills is passed, it should be taken up for approval by the other chamber and sent to the president for signature and implementation.

Permanent authorization of USICH will ensure that its modest budget of \$3.6 million will be funded each year until the work of ending homelessness is achieved.