

## **Agenda Item 7B: Expanding HUD's Definition of Homelessness**

**Action Needed:** Commitment to Action

**Background:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Education (ED) employ different definitions of homelessness. The definition of homelessness used by HUD is limited to people living on the streets or in shelters; it excludes people living in doubled-up situations and those in motels. The definition of homelessness used by ED is broader, and specifically includes children and youth who are “sharing the housing of others *due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.*” In addition, children and youth who “are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds *due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations*” are specifically included, along with other temporary living situations (emphasis added).

The Child Welfare League of America, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council, the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness, and Volunteers of America believe that the HUD definition of homelessness should be amended to explicitly include two of the homeless situations referenced above (living doubled-up and in hotels or motels) that are included in the ED definition of homelessness.

### **Points of Consideration:**

- The groups listed above are asking local governments and community groups to encourage the US Conference of Mayors, National Association of Counties, and others to urge HUD to expand its definition of homelessness. (See attached ‘Talking Points’)
- The current HUD definition ignores the real need for housing and homeless assistance by using a limited definition of homelessness; this does nothing to assist policymakers, service providers, and others in making informed decisions about who is impacted by the affordable housing crisis in our communities. It does not give local communities the flexibility to respond to local needs for homeless families and children.
- Homeless families and youth often have no choice but to live doubled-up or in motels. The street is not an option for families with children, given the risks to children and potential child welfare involvement. Across the country, housing is unaffordable, and in Pinellas County emergency shelters are full all the time.
- Families and youth in doubled-up and motel situations are among the most vulnerable segments of the homeless population. Homelessness directly contributes to physical, mental and emotional harm to children and youth. In addition, there is evidence that experiencing homelessness as a child is associated with experiencing deep poverty and homelessness as an adult. Yet despite their desperate need for HUD funded housing and supportive services, these families and youth cannot access that assistance because HUD does not consider them to be homeless.
- Making HUD's definition of homelessness more like the one used by ED will result in better coordination between programs and services funded by the two agencies.

**Recommendation:** Commit to ask your home government or organization to adopt the following draft resolution and send it to the Council of Mayors, NACo, and/or HUD.