August 21, 2019

The Honorable Susan Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Collins,

We are pleased that Congress has agreed to raise the discretionary funding limits established under the Budget Control Act for fiscal years 2020 and 2021. The Maine Together Coalition urges you to seek the most robust funding levels possible for HUD programs, and subsequently to prioritize housing assistance for the nation’s most vulnerable people for additional resources when you negotiate final appropriations legislation for FY20. Federal rental assistance programs play a critical role in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the United States, helping make homes affordable for almost 10 million people, including nearly 4 million children. Without question, research demonstrates that when people have stable affordable homes, lives dramatically improve. They are healthier and less hungry. Their children do better in school. They can more readily escape poverty and climb the income ladder. Economic productivity is stronger. And our nation is more just and equitable.

Yet, despite the documented successful outcomes of our nation’s federal rental assistance programs, only a small fraction of eligible households receives the assistance they need to help cover the rent. Due to chronic underfunding, only 1 in 4 eligible households receive federal rental assistance of any kind, even as rising rents have reached historic heights. In fact, nowhere in Maine can a full-time worker earning minimum wage afford a modest two-bedroom rental.

Congress must take bold action to reverse this alarming trend and provide housing stability and opportunity for millions of people, helping lift thousands of Mainers out of poverty, significantly reduce homelessness among families with children, and improve the health and chances of succeeding in school for tens of thousands of at-risk children.

We look forward to working with you to help make housing more affordable and stable for Mainers in need.

Sincerely,

Maine Together

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Maine Together is a nonpartisan coalition of Maine organizations that recognizes the vital role federal domestic programs play in supporting Maine’s economy and people. We value healthy, vibrant, inclusive communities for Mainers of all ages and capabilities. Maine Together stands strongly for the principle that we are interconnected and supportive of each other, and advocates for a federal budget that reflects our shared vision for Maine.