

May 6, 2019

The Honorable Rob Portman
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Angus King
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Portman, Senator King, and Senator Brown,

I am writing on behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, to thank you for your leadership in reintroducing the Housing for Homeless Students Act of 2019 (S.767).

As an organization committed to securing a bright future for homeless children and youth, we applaud efforts to help those battling homelessness to pursue an education and escape homelessness and poverty as adults.

According to the National Center for Homeless Education, there were over 1.3 million homeless children and youth enrolled in public school during the 2016-2017 school year.¹ On top of that, a survey conducted on college students in 2018 found that 36 percent of college students were housing insecure, 9 percent were homeless, and 1 in 4 former foster youth enrolled in higher education had experienced homelessness in the past year.² Currently, homeless youth, or those who have experienced homelessness in the past, who attend a four-year college or university full-time cannot take advantage of housing built with funds from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) Program due to the “student rule”.

This “student rule” was put in place to prevent LIHTC dollars from being used to build dormitories, as well as to prevent college students with temporarily low incomes from taking advantage of resources reserved for individuals and families with more serious housing needs. However, homeless and previously homeless youth experience unique housing needs and lack the access to housing and financial resources that many other college students have available to them through their families.

This legislation would amend the Internal Revenue Code by changing the “student rule” in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program to allow homeless and formerly homeless youth who are attending a college or university full-time to qualify for housing built with these low-income housing tax credits. These populations would now be exempted from the “student rule”, along with former foster youth, single parents, and parents receiving public assistance.

¹ “Federal Data Summary School Years 2014-15 to 2016-17: Education for Homeless Children and Youth,” *National Center for Homeless Education*, February 2019. <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Federal-Data-Summary-SY-14.15-to-16.17-Final-Published-2.12.19.pdf>. Accessed 6 May 2019.

² Goldrick-Rab, Sara, Richardson, Jed, Schneider, Joel, Hernandez, Anthony, and Cady, Clare. “Still Hungry and Homeless in College,” *Wisconsin Hope Lab*, April 2018. <https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Wisconsin-HOPE-Lab-Still-Hungry-and-Homeless.pdf>. Accessed 6 May 2019.

Allowing homeless and previously homeless youth who attend college to access LIHTC housing would be a significant step towards helping to ensure that these youth do not have to choose between pursuing an education and having a roof over their head.

We are grateful for your leadership in introducing this legislation, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you on this and other proposals to improve the well-being of America's children and youth.

Sincerely,



Bruce Lesley
President