

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2007

Representative David Obey
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth
Washington D.C. 20515

Representative Jerry Lewis
Chairman, Appropriations Committee
H-218 U.S. Capital
Washington D.C. 20515

Representative John Olver
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing and Urban Development
and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
1111 Longworth
Washington D.C. 20515

Representative Joseph Knollenberg
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing and Urban
Development and Related Agencies
House Appropriations Committee
2349 Rayburn
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Obey, Chairman Olver, Ranking Member Lewis, and Ranking
Member Knollenberg:

We write as members of the House of Representatives from the State of Louisiana with a small but critically important request: emergency funding for 3,000 rental subsidies, to provide supportive housing for people with severe disabilities who still live in the worst possible circumstances due to the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita along the Gulf Coast in 2005.

For these poorest members of our community, recovery is far from complete. Their primary need is permanent supportive housing (PSH). A comprehensive PSH system will combine flexible community based services with subsidized permanent rental housing for extremely low-income people with serious and long-term disabilities such as mental illness, developmental

disabilities, physical disabilities, substance abuse, and chronic health conditions. Many of these citizens are currently living in a range of unstable, unhealthy conditions.

Supportive housing is a proven, cost-effective means of stabilizing and dramatically improving the lives of people with severe disabilities who have the lowest incomes. Its utility has been recognized by the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, the Congressional Millennial Housing Commission, the Bush Administration in its Chronic Homelessness Initiative, and by the House of Representatives when it passed H.R. 1227, the *Gulf Coast Hurricane Recovery Act of 2007*, in March of this year. This bill, among other things, authorized the PSH voucher program.

The State of Louisiana also committed to helping these most vulnerable hurricane survivors by establishing a goal of 3,000 units of PSH in the Louisiana Road Home Program. Without funding for rent subsidies, however, PSH cannot be made available to these people for whom it was intended.

There are three critical components needed to make PSH work: (1) capital funds to build the housing ("bricks and mortar"); (2) supportive services funding to ensure successful tenancies; and (3) project-based rental subsidies to ensure permanent affordability for people with the lowest incomes. We are extremely grateful for our past colleagues' support for the first two of these three components. The State has targeted GO-Zone tax credit and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for capital expenses for permanent supportive housing. It has also set aside substantial CDBG funds for supportive services in these developments. But because there is no funding for rental assistance, the developments cannot meet the identified need.

The Senate version of last year's supplemental appropriation included funding that could have been used for this purpose, but it was stripped out in conference with the idea that CDBG funds could be used for operating subsidies. This has proven impracticable despite the best efforts of everyone working on this issue in Louisiana. CDBG is essentially a capital program and simply cannot provide the continued funding needed to serve homeless people and people with Supplemental Security Incomes equivalent to 20 percent of median income. Only two HUD programs – the project-based component of the Housing Choice Voucher program and project-based Shelter Plus Care vouchers – can meet this need.

We request that you include \$70 million in the FY 2008 supplemental appropriations bill or other upcoming appropriations legislation, to pay for 2,000 project-based vouchers under the Housing Choice Voucher program and 1,000

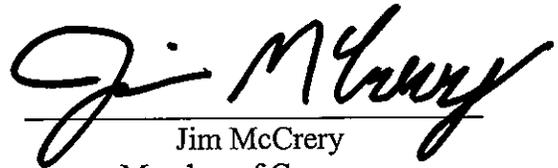
project-based subsidies under the Shelter Plus Care program. It is critical that this funding be enacted as soon as possible because some of the PSH developments will be ready to be occupied in coming months, and cannot be accessed without rent subsidies. We also request that this be designated as emergency spending to help the poorest of our people who are still living in the worst possible circumstances as a result of the hurricanes.

We regard this emergency as a very high priority because it will ensure that these chronically homeless people are properly taken care of and included in the recovery. Thank you in advance for consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Richard Baker
Member of Congress



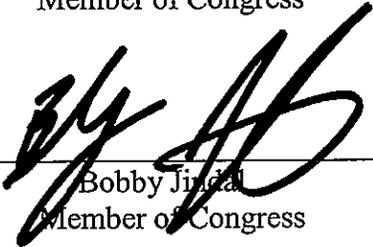
Jim McCrery
Member of Congress



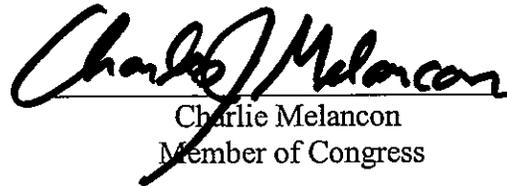
William Jefferson
Member of Congress



Rodney Alexander
Member of Congress



Bobby Jindal
Member of Congress



Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress