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S. 1518 – The Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007

BACKGROUND:

On Thursday, May 24, Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island introduced the Community Partnership to End Homelessness Act of 2007 (CPEHA). CPEHA reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs that are administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Because CPEHA fails to address several of NPACH's significant concerns, we cannot support the bill in its current form. We call on the Senate to amend CPEHA as it moves forward, so that the bill better addresses the concerns of homeless children, youth, and families who are desperately in need of assistance. These concerns are effectively addressed in the HEARTH Act (H.R. 840), McKinney-Vento reauthorization legislation supported by NPACH that is pending in the House.

TALKING POINTS – HOW TO AMEND CPEHA:

HUD's Definition of Homelessness Should Encompass All People Without Homes

- *Amend HUD's definition of homelessness to include people living in hotels / motels and doubled up living situations, due to the inability to obtain adequate alternative accommodations*. This would align HUD's definition of homelessness with the definition used by the U.S. Department of Education, allowing vulnerable homeless children, youth, and families to potentially access HUD homeless assistance programs. It would also align CPEHA with the HEARTH Act.

HUD's Definition of Chronic Homelessness Should Include Vulnerable Families

- *Amend HUD's definition of "chronic homelessness" to include families with a disabled child.* Current law limits this definition to single adults. CPEHA would add families where the head of household has a disability. NPACH believes that this language should be further expanded to make homeless families eligible for permanent supportive housing when they have a disabled child. The burdens of caring for a disabled child are severe – without access to permanent housing and supportive services, it is very difficult for a parent to care for a disabled child while also working to support his or her family.

HUD Should Allow Local Communities to Prioritize Spending of Homeless Assistance Grant Funds

- *Eliminate CPEHA's incentives for the development of permanent housing.* CPEHA proposes to set aside 40% of McKinney-Vento funding for permanent housing – 30% for disabled individuals or families with a disabled head of household, and 10% for homeless families, whether or not any household member has a disability. Current law contains the 30% set-aside referenced above, without the additional 10%. NPACH does not support these set-asides, based on the experience of our members, who have found that at the local level this rigid targeting often results in good programs being de-funded in order to meet HUD's guidelines.

Local Funding Decisions Should be Made With Full Community Participation

- *Codify the Continuum of Care process for local communities to determine their funding priorities.* HUD's Continuum of Care process has largely ensured that all key stakeholders have been at the table to help determine local funding priorities. CPEHA does not codify this process. NPACH believes that maximum community participation should be ensured. Accordingly, we recommend aligning CPEHA with the HEARTH Act by ensuring that a wide range of groups take part in local planning to apply for HUD Homeless Assistance Grant funds.