

**Briefing Paper for the
U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
Federal Strategic Plan Community Workgroup
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Thank you for requesting my written comments to guide the task force in developing its part of the Federal Strategic Plan to End Homelessness. They are as follows:

First, any plan must be aimed at ending homelessness for **all** homeless people. The best way to accomplish this, in my view and that of other national advocates, is through a focus on the causes of homelessness and solutions to it. This focuses attention and energy where it should be focused—on solutions—rather than on identifying and describing the characteristics of the people affected. In contrast, a population-based focus risks leaving out important parts of the population (as they already appear to have been) and does not take into account differing needs in different parts of the country. In addition, I urge the Council to incorporate in the Plan a commitment to the human right to housing for all homeless people and to set ensuring that right as a goal, with specific action steps to reach it, as Scotland has done.

Specific steps that the Council and Administration can and should take to end homelessness have been outlined in numerous documents prepared for the Council by the Homeless Advocates Group, a coalition of the national advocacy organizations working to end homelessness that is convened by NLCHP. The Group includes the Corporation for Supportive Housing, Family Promise, Give Us Your Poor, HomeBase, National Aids Housing Coalition, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, National Center on Family Homelessness, National Center for Housing and Child Welfare, National Health care for the Homeless Council, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Network to End Domestic Violence, National Network 4 Youth, National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness, and Western Regional Advocacy Project.

As outlined in our most recent letter to the Council, dated December 3, 2009, these solutions encompass these six areas: 1) Commit to End Homelessness Now, with Public Participation; 2) Increase Access to Affordable Housing; 3) Expand Access to Affordable Health Services; 4) Ensure Adequate Incomes; 5) Ensure Access to Childhood Education; 6) Protect Against Discrimination. We make specific recommendations within each of these areas. Rather than repeat them here, I am attaching a copy of our joint letter.

In addition, NLCHP presented its own recommendations to the Domestic Policy Council on September 16, 2009. These track the recommendations of the Homeless Advocates Group and include more specific recommendations on issues that the NLCHP is focusing on, including: Increasing access to vacant federal properties by reforming Title V of the McKinney-Vento Act and the Base Closure and Homeless Assistance Act; Preventing

domestic violence survivors from becoming homeless by implementing and enforcing their housing rights under the Violence Against Women Act; Preventing renters in foreclosed properties from becoming homeless by educating them about their rights under the Protecting Renters at Foreclosure Act; Increasing enforcement of the Education for Children and Youth program of the McKinney-Vento Act; Removing identification and other barriers to public benefits and conducting outreach to homeless people to help them apply for and receive them; Protecting homeless people from criminalization and urging cities to adopt constructive approaches to street homelessness (as now required by HEARTH). A copy of NLCHP's recommendations is enclosed.

I hope that the Council and this working group will give serious consideration to both the joint recommendations of the major national organizations working to end homelessness and to the more specific recommendations made by NLCHP.