



The Public Health Emergency Shelter Act of 2020

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked devastating havoc on our nation's workers, families and economy. Schools have closed, small businesses have shuttered and neighbors have been directed to remain in their homes. The threat of COVID-19 is particularly high for the more than 500,000¹ people across our nation who lack accessible, adequate and stable housing.

During this public health emergency, individuals experiencing homelessness are particularly vulnerable because they are disproportionately more likely to have underlying health conditions, lack access to medical resources and safe, clean and stable shelter.² Many people experiencing homelessness, including more than 50,000 families with children,³ often live in congregate living settings—like emergency shelters. These environments can accelerate the spread of COVID-19 among those experiencing homelessness as well as our frontline healthcare workers and human services workers.

The Public Health Emergency Shelter Act

The [*Public Health Emergency Shelter Act*](#) will provide critical funding to states and local governments who are responding to the needs of families and individuals experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 crisis. Specifically, the bill would:

- **Invest \$15.5 billion in Emergency Solutions Grants under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
Formula grant funds will support state, county and local efforts to protect our neighbors experiencing homelessness and the frontline providers that serve the homeless community during this public health crisis. Grant funds may also be used to:
 - Train frontline staff on infectious disease prevention and mitigation;
 - Provide hazard pay for frontline workers working around the clock to support those experiencing homelessness during this crisis. Funding can also be used to provide retroactive pay for hours already worked;
 - Reimburse local frontline providers for costs incurred associated with the prevention and mitigation of COVID-19.

The Public Health Emergency Act outlines the bold and swift action needed to meet the scale of the crisis and ensure the health and safety of vulnerable members of our communities.

¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness, "The State of Homelessness in America," (2017) <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report-legacy/>

² Jack Tsai and Michal Wilson, "COVID-19: A Potential Public Health Problem for Homeless Populations" (Mar. 2020), [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(20\)30053-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(20)30053-0/fulltext)

³ National Alliance to End Homelessness, "Children and Families" (Jan. 2019) <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/who-experiences-homelessness/children-and-families/>