The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

In every American community, youth run away from home, are kicked out of their house, exit the juvenile justice system with nowhere to go, become orphans, or exit the child welfare system with no support to enable successful transitions to adulthood. Homeless children and youth are at high risk for developing physical, behavioral, and emotional problems and also becoming victims of sex and labor trafficking. Without assistance, homeless youth often end up in the criminal justice system, and don’t have the means to get effective help. Addressing the needs of homeless children and youth is a critical investment in our children’s future.

A November 2017 ground-breaking report from the University of Chicago found that 4.2 million young people experienced homelessness in America over a 12-month period. This means that 1 in 10 young adults aged 18-25, and at least 1 in 30 adolescents aged 13-17, experienced some form of homelessness and are unaccompanied by a parent or guardian over the course of a year. Importantly, it also revealed that homelessness is just as much of a challenge in rural communities as it is in urban communities and that youth without a high school degree or GED are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness. Recent data from the National Human Trafficking Hotline shows that being a runaway homeless youth and living in unstable housing are two of the top risk factors for human trafficking. Public schools also identified 1.3 million homeless children and youth from 2016 to 2017, which is a seven percent increase from the previous three school years. Now more than ever, these children need our attention.

Therefore, we urge you to provide strong support for child and youth homelessness programs as you consider appropriations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, provide vital assistance for community organizations, school districts, and public agencies across the country that serve homeless children and youth.

The RHYA and EHCY programs have effectively addressed the needs of child and youth
homelessness. Through the excellent work of local street outreach, shelter, and transitional living programs, RHYA has helped homeless youth in education, employment, personal savings, and family preservation. Local education agencies depend on EHCY grants to provide identification, enrollment, and transportation assistance, as well as academic support and referrals for basic services. The EHCY program provides school stability and support to mitigate the effects of homelessness and give homeless youth access to the services they need.

Congress recently recognized the critical role that programs funded through RHYA serve to prevent trafficking, identify survivors, and provide services to runaway, homeless and disconnected youth by including a two-year reauthorization of RHYA in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2018. It is time, however, for Congress to make a commitment to a long-term authorization and include $165 million to appropriately reflect the previously established levels of funding. This will enable HHS to potentially support hundreds of additional programs that help service providers prevent and respond to youth and young adult homelessness.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) authorized $85 million for the EHCY program, and made numerous improvements, including enhanced requirements and training for state and local homeless coordinators, better identification of homeless children and youth, enhanced school stability, and special protections for preschool children and unaccompanied homeless youth. With only 24 percent of school districts receiving support through the EHCY program in any given year, it is clear that resources directed to child and youth homelessness programs are critical for caring for the needs of homeless youth, preventing human trafficking, and improving lives. Congress last appropriated $93.5 million for EHCY in Fiscal Year 2019. Given unprecedented increases in student homelessness, and the role of education in ending homelessness, we support robust funding for this critical program to appropriately address the issues facing homeless children and youth.

In light of new research demonstrating the widespread prevalence of unaccompanied youth and young adult homelessness, and the continued growth in family homelessness, robustly funding programs such as RHYA and EHCY is more important than ever. We urge you to support strong funding levels for EHCY and RHYA programs in the FY20 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill in order to meet the unprecedented need for safe and stable housing and supportive services for homeless youth. Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your support of programs to help end child and youth homelessness.

Sincerely,

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Nanette Barragan
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle
Member of Congress
Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Hakeem Jeffries
Member of Congress

Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.
Member of Congress