

NAACP

San Luis Obispo County Branch

INDIVISIBLE

RAPID RESPONSE TEAM SLO COUNTY

The fourth in our series of “*Open Letters to Congress*” deals with “*The Housing Crisis*” Also attached are our congressmen’s replies to our “Healthcare for All” concerns. Replies to all of our *Letters* will be posted at <https://naacpslocty.org/>.

Open Letter to Congress

Contributor: Susan Funk, SLO County Homeless Services Oversight Council

Topic: The Housing Crisis

Open letter to Representatives Jimmy Panetta and Salud Carbajal regarding housing and homelessness:

Federal disinvestment in housing production over a sustained period has contributed significantly to the twin crises in housing and homelessness that we face in SLO County. The scope and depth of these problems merit federal action both to increase the kinds of housing that the market is failing to supply and to support housing access integrated with services when needed for those who get left out, such as working people with modest wages, seniors, people with disabilities, and individuals with serious mental illness or addiction.

From the legislation you have each introduced, we know you recognize the importance of these issues. Here are some of our most urgent requests:

Housing supply steps:

1. Expand project-based vouchers. These vouchers expand housing capacity permanently. They guarantee an income-based subsidy for tenants in a unit over a long time period, so that developers can afford to build these units. This type of voucher has been used to excellent effect in adding housing to accommodate formerly homeless veterans, resulting in cutting the number of homeless vets in SLO County from 300 to less than 20. Let’s do this for others, too.
2. Expand federal tax credit financing for low income projects, as Congressman Panetta has proposed, and make sure that high-cost housing markets have ready access to these funds. There are well-supported, shovel-ready affordable housing projects in this County that have languished for years while seeking tax credit financing, and long delays add to the cost.
3. Expand availability of housing vouchers that bridge the gap between incomes and rents.
4. Expand supports for adding workforce and farm worker housing.
5. Continue the commitment to ending veteran homelessness.

Services that keep people housed and functioning:

6. Streamline and expand funding for homeless services.
7. Ensure ongoing support for the Medicaid waiver that supports CalAIM, which lets Medicaid health plans pay for various housing supports as medical interventions for unhoused or recently re-housed people. This offers more secure funding for ongoing needs, and lets plans find ways to reduce total costs to the taxpayer while providing better care.
8. Support expanded funding for addiction recovery, and streamline approvals and access to treatment for people who have both addiction and mental health issues.

9. Make it possible for seniors and people with disabilities who are unhoused or at risk of homelessness to get Assisted Living care without leaving the area (e.g. expand the existing waiver to include SLO County).
10. Make organized safe parking programs eligible for homeless services grant funding, as Congressman Carbajal has proposed, so that services can be provided to make sure these programs succeed.

Contact your Congressman. Share your thoughts.

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