

May 5, 2009

## **ACTION ALERT**

### **Oppose the McKinney-Vento Reauthorization Amendment**

#### **ACTION REQUESTED:**

The National Coalition for the Homeless urges people experiencing homelessness, service providers, advocates, and concerned Americans to contact their Senators *today* and ask them to vote NO on the Reed-Bond amendment to the Senate bill S. 896, an amendment to reauthorize the HUD McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs. While reauthorization of these programs is important and necessary, the amendment currently contains a number of shortcomings that must be addressed before the measure is considered by the full Senate.

*The Senate will vote on this amendment TODAY, so it is urgent that you act immediately!*

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Visit the website of the U.S. Senate, [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), to learn the names of the two Senators from your state. You can locate this information by selecting your state in the box in the upper right hand corner, or by selecting the “Senators” tab on the left.
- Contact the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to the Senators from your state.
- Inform the receptionists that you would like to make a comment about S. 896, the Helping Families Save their Homes Act, which is being considered by the Senate *today*.
- The receptionist will take your message, transfer you to another person, or transfer you to a voicemail box. Whether you are speaking live or leaving a message, you are invited to use this text as a call script:

“Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live in [your hometown and state]. I am calling to urge Senator \_\_\_\_\_ to vote NO on the Reed-Bond amendment to S. 896, an amendment to reauthorize the HUD McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs. This amendment contains a number of shortcomings that will prevent some homeless people from receiving needed services, limit the participation of service providers and people experiencing homelessness in the decision-making process, and restrict the ability of communities to serve their geographic areas in the way that makes the most sense locally. Until these shortcomings are addressed, the measure should not be brought before the full Senate. Thank you.”

#### **BACKGROUND:**

The McKinney-Vento homeless assistance programs are the federal government’s oldest and most significant response to homelessness. The McKinney-Vento programs administered by the

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are vital for providing emergency shelter, connecting people experiencing homelessness to needed services, and helping to move homeless families and individuals back into safe, decent, and affordable housing. Congress is currently considering legislation to reauthorize the HUD McKinney-Vento programs—an action that has not been taken since 1994.

While reauthorization is an important and necessary step, the bills currently being considered in Congress contain a number of shortcomings that must be addressed before they are brought to a vote. Earlier this week, Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Kit Bond (R-MO) offered an amendment to attach their McKinney-Vento reauthorization bill to another bill, S. 896, the Helping Families Save their Homes Act, with hopes that it will pass without comment.

Among the concerns that NCH has with the Reed-Bond reauthorization amendment are:

- *Ineligible People*—The definition of “homeless individual” given in the amendment, though lengthy and burdensome for service providers who would have to adhere to it, fails to include all individuals generally recognized as homeless, including many in shared housing or motels and many vulnerable children and youth.
- *Weakens Community Decision-Making*—The amendment fails to assign a role to homeless people or service providers as formal decision-makers in a geographic area’s collaborative application for funding.
- *Restrictions on Eligible Activities*—The bills would put into the force of law restrictions on a community’s use of funds, and add would add some new restrictions as well. This will further reduce geographic areas’ flexibility to respond to homelessness the way it makes most sense.
- *Privacy Concerns*—The bills authorize a data collection and reporting system on clients of McKinney-Vento-funded projects, but do not ensure client privacy and safety of their data.

NCH acknowledges that others in the homeless advocacy community have different viewpoints on this legislation. We hope that those who share our concerns will speak up before it is too late.

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### **ACTION RESOURCES:**

- For a full list of NCH’s recommendations for reauthorization, view our side-by-side at: [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/housing/HMV\\_SidebySide.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/housing/HMV_SidebySide.pdf)
- To read the full text of the Reed-Bond amendment, search for “S. 808” or “H.R. 1877” at [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov).

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

Contact Adam Gaeddert, NCH Policy Advocate, [agaeddert@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:agaeddert@nationalhomeless.org) or 202.462.4822.