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**United States Senate**  
COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6075

GREGG RICHARD, STAFF DIRECTOR  
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January 30, 2020

Dr. Robert G. Marbut, Jr.  
Executive Director  
U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness  
301 7th St., SW, Room 2080  
Washington, DC 20407

Dear Executive Director Marbut:

The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) plays a critical role in the nation's response to homelessness, coordinating the work of 19 federal agencies and building partnerships with communities to prevent and end homelessness. It must have strong, qualified leadership, informed by evidence, to guide this work. We are troubled by reports of policies you have previously recommended to communities. These have included the rejection of evidence-based Housing First approaches, and the adoption of punitive policies that would prevent charities from providing food to people experiencing homelessness and require people to earn the right to sleep indoors at local shelters. We write concerning the policies and approach you may advance as the new leader of the USICH.

We share the view that homelessness and housing instability are real crises. To better understand how you propose to solve these problems in your capacity as the Executive Director of the USICH, we ask that you please answer the following questions by February 6, 2020.

1. Your first statement as Executive Director of USICH called for addressing the "true causes" of homelessness. What do you believe are the true causes of homelessness?
2. Do you believe there is a shortage of affordable rental housing in the U.S.?
3. Between 2001 and 2018, rental housing costs grew by 13 percent while renters' incomes barely broke even after losses following the financial crisis. According to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, nearly half of all renter households (20.5 million) spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing costs, and a quarter of all renter households (11 million) spend more than 50 percent of their incomes on housing costs.<sup>1</sup> Do you think these housing affordability trends contribute to homelessness trends?
4. Do you believe the Administration's requests to eliminate the CDBG, HOME, and Housing Trust Fund programs will help in the effort to address homelessness?
5. In 2018, the USICH released *Home, Together the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, in close coordination with its federal agency partners and after extensive consultation with local, state, and national stakeholders and Congressional

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/state-nations-housing-2019>

staff. As Executive Director, do you plan to revise this strategic plan within the next year? If so, how? Please provide a plan for your timeline and your plan for consultation and solicitation of comments and coordination with the Council, with your federal agency partners, and with Congress.

6. *Home, Together* sets population-specific goals to end homelessness among: veterans; people with disabilities experiencing chronic homelessness; families with children; unaccompanied youth; and all other individuals. Do you intend to work to end homelessness among each of these populations? Please describe the evidence base and data that you will rely upon for shaping and assessing the impacts of strategies to prevent and end homelessness for these populations.
7. Since 2010, the number of homeless veterans has declined by nearly half, and 78 communities and three states have declared an end to veteran homelessness.<sup>2</sup> How will your office continue to support the Department of Veterans Affairs in its drive to end veteran homelessness?
8. The USICH's activities and structure are governed by both its authorizing and appropriations statutes, including Section 405 of Division H of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94). Do you plan to restructure USICH staffing or operations? If so, please provide a plan for what you propose. On what operational plan is this based? How many Schedule C employees does the USICH have? Are the remainder of USICH's employees career civil servants?
9. Have you been working with other Administration officials to develop an Executive Order or other new strategies or initiatives to address homelessness?
10. To your knowledge, has anyone else at USICH been working with other Administration officials to develop an Executive Order or other new strategies or initiatives to address homelessness? If so, who?
11. If you have been working on, or know of, such an Executive Order, strategies, or initiatives:
  - a. What are the elements of this Executive Order, strategy, or initiative?
  - b. Is federal funding for additional affordable housing one of these elements?
  - c. Do any of these elements include efforts to arrest or forcefully disperse or institutionalize people living in homeless encampments?
  - d. Do any of these elements involve making federal property available as housing, emergency shelter, or other living arrangements for homeless individuals and/or families?
  - e. If you are considering the use of federal property in this effort, how will you evaluate whether the property is suitable as a temporary or permanent living environment for people experiencing homelessness?
  - f. Are you or others working on this effort involving staff of USICH and/or other federal agencies who have experience working on homelessness in these discussions?
  - g. Are you or others working on this effort reaching out to local and national stakeholders who have worked with communities to implement solutions to

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/accomplishments/accomplishments.asp>

homelessness to inform your work? If so, who are these groups and how is this input shaping your plans?

We look forward to your prompt response.


Sincerely,



SHERROD BROWN  
United States Senator



JACK REED  
United States Senator



ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator



JON TESTER  
United States Senator



MARK R. WARNER  
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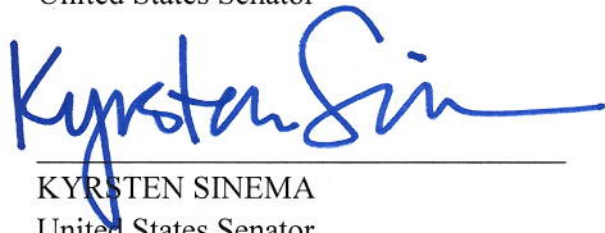
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