



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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June 28, 2007

United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

As Chairman of the Domestic Policy Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write in strong support of the bill creating a National Housing Trust Fund. The Catholic Church has historically urged the federal government to meet our nation's promise of a decent home for every American family.

Through our Charities agencies, dioceses, and parishes, the Catholic Community serves tens of thousands of men, women, and children who struggle to avoid homelessness and to maintain adequate housing. Besides sheltering homeless people who turn to us for help, we have built, and continued to maintain, thousands of affordable housing units. All of these experiences have demonstrated to us how homelessness and inadequate, substandard housing destroys lives, undermines families, hurts communities, and weakens the social fabric of our nation. Despite our efforts--and the efforts of so many others--there is just not enough affordable housing available.

The Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University found that "the incidence of housing affordability problems barely eased for low income households and started to increase among moderate income households" in the booming economy of the 1990's. Currently, there is no state in the union where a minimum wage worker can afford to rent a two bedroom apartment at the fair market rent.

The USCCB statement, *Putting Children and Families First*, notes: "Many families cannot find or afford decent housing, or must spend so much of their income for shelter that they forego other necessities, such as food and medicine.... [The Catholic bishops] support housing policies which seek to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing and help families pay for it." We must put in place a sustainable source of funds to build affordable housing.

This National Housing Trust Fund presents Congress with a genuine opportunity to let the American people know that the shelter needs of low-income families is a national priority. I urge your support for this bill as one way to demonstrate how vitally important housing is to the well-being of families and our communities.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D.
Bishop of Brooklyn
Chairman, Domestic Policy Committee