



COMMITTEE ON
DOMESTIC JUSTICE AND
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



JESUITS



Catholic
Charities
USA.



July 12, 2024

The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Chairman
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Delivered Electronically

Dear Chairman Brown:

Catholics believe that housing is a human right and as such governments, the private sector, nonprofit organizations, and churches and their ministries, have a shared responsibility to ensure all people have access to affordable and stable housing. The Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, Catholic Charities USA, and the National Council of the U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul support S. 3910, the Yes in God's Backyard Act, because it would help faith-based and nonprofit organizations improve their capacity to meet the housing needs of poor and vulnerable community members. We urge its passage.

The United States is in the midst of a profound and prolonged housing crisis. A systemic lack of affordable housing drives up housing costs for low-income households, exacerbating their financial insecurity. The problems are even more acute for African American, Latino, and Indigenous households, who are at least twice as likely to experience housing cost burdens as white households.¹

The Catholic Church's ministries, in the form of local Catholic Charities agencies, related Catholic nonprofit affordable housing providers and other organizations, constitute one of the largest private providers of housing to poor and vulnerable people across the country. However, more must be done to respond to the immense suffering faced by poor households, and Catholics can do more. In *The Right to a Decent Home*, the Catholic bishops of the United States challenge Catholic institutions to "take an inventory of our property and real estate, reflect upon its utilization, and examine how it might better be put at the service of those who lack adequate shelter. . . [as well as] make better use of our economic and personnel resources to assist those who need housing" (No. 89).² S. 3910 would make it easier for the Church to do precisely this, empowering faith-based and other nonprofit institutions to use their resources responsibly to serve more vulnerable families.

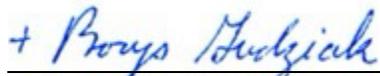
We respectfully note that the utility of grants under S. 3910 to religious organizations would be maximized, consistent with the spirit of the bill, if the bill is amended to relieve recipient organizations of the compliance obligations that typically apply to federal funding.

¹ National Low Income Housing Coalition (2024). *The Gap*. Available: nlihc.org/gap

² United States Catholic Conference (1975). *The Right to a Decent Home*. Available: usccb.org/resources/right-decent-home-pastoral-response-crisis-housing-november-20-1975

Thank you for all you do to serve and empower poor and vulnerable families. We look forward to working with you on this and other policies that advance the common good.

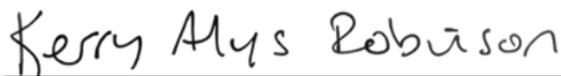
Sincerely,



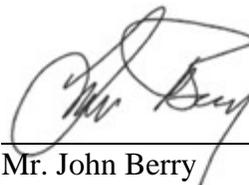
Most Rev. Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Ukrainian Catholic
Archeprarchy of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development
United States Conference of Catholic
Bishops



Rev. Christopher Kellerman, SJ
Secretary, Office of Justice and Ecology
Jesuit Conference of Canada and
the United States



Kerry Alys Robinson
President & CEO
Catholic Charities USA



Mr. John Berry
President
National Council of the United States
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Cc: The Honorable Tim Scott, Ranking Member, United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing,
and Urban Affairs
The Honorable Patrick McHenry, Chairman, United States House Financial Services Committee
The Honorable Maxine Waters, Ranking Member, United States House Financial Services Committee