

**The Catholic Bishops of New Jersey call on Congress to Fund
The National Housing Trust Fund**

May 29, 2015

On October 28, 2014, Pope Francis called our attention to the plight of the homeless:

We live nowadays in immense cities that show off proudly, even arrogantly, how modern they are. But while they offer wellbeing and innumerable pleasures for a happy minority, housing is denied to thousands of our neighbors, our brothers and sisters including children who are called elegant names such as ‘street people’ or ‘without fixed abode’ or ‘urban camper.’ Isn’t it curious how euphemisms abound in the world of injustices!

Pope Francis could have been speaking to New Jersey which is facing a growing housing crisis. Our State has thousands of citizens who are unable to afford safe and decent housing. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, our State has a shortage of at least 210,500 affordable housing units. The lack of affordable housing is exacerbated because housing in New Jersey is more expensive than all but a few other states in our country.

Catholic Charities and other non-profit organizations provide significant housing services. But those efforts are *inadequate* to meet our affordable housing needs. As a society, we need to do more for the working poor. We need to do more for people with disabilities. We need to do more for seniors on fixed incomes and for our veterans.

Federal, state and local governments must be active partners in supporting policies and programs that provide funding for increased affordable housing.

In particular, we urge Congress to provide adequate funding for the National Housing Trust Fund which Congress is considering at this time. Since 2008, due to the great recession and the slow recovery, the Federal Housing and Finance Agency has suspended funding for the National Housing Trust Fund. Now is the time to fund the Trust as one step towards making affordable housing available for people who struggle each day just to make ends meet.

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