August 17, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sherrod Brown  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maxine Waters  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The 97 undersigned organizations – representing Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), affordable housing developers, community-based organizations, and more – write to share our support for the Biden-Harris administration’s proposed Community Revitalization Fund. The Community Revitalization Fund represents a game-changing opportunity to dedicate large-scale resources specifically to Community Cornerstone Projects – like health care clinics, parks, grocery stores, local ethnic media, workforce development or other essential community resources – which are often the lynchpin of creating and sustaining healthy communities. We urge you to prioritize the Community Revitalization Fund’s enactment in any legislative vehicle that arises this year.

The Community Revitalization Fund would be a new grant program administered by HUD to invest in community assets that build wealth for existing residents, increase community engagement, and strengthen civic infrastructure. We believe the Community Revitalization Fund can accelerate the impact of various affordable housing and community development funding streams by dedicating flexible capital to fund the connective tissue between people, places, and projects. These resources are particularly important as the administration has proposed a historic $213 billion in affordable housing funding and an additional $100 billion in housing tax credits in the American Jobs Plan. Our organizations have collectively learned from decades of experience working with place-based investments that investing in affordable housing without a complementary focus on broader civic infrastructure and community amenities can limit our ability to truly dismantle inequitable systems and create opportunity for local residents. The Community Revitalization Fund is a critical complement to the administration’s proposed investments in underserved communities because it focuses on the broader assets and amenities that intentionally center racial and economic equity and prioritize local capacity building.

Based on the collective experience of the undersigned organizations – which includes mission-based investors, developers, community leaders, local ethnic media, and leading voices on racial equity – we recommend that the Community Revitalization Fund be structured with the following core program elements:

1. **HUD should competitively award Community Revitalization Fund resources to CDFIs among eligible entities.** CDFIs are mission-based intermediaries that have proven to be strong partners to the federal government and bring a focus on intentional impact in communities, rather than just measuring outcomes. CDFIs can also present a business strategy to connect federal resources with a comprehensive plan and diverse local partners, and technical assistance and underwriting practices that ensure funds are structured to support the recipient’s ongoing
financial feasibility. CDFIs most recently demonstrated their strength as critical mission lenders in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), outperforming other PPP lenders in reaching smaller and lower-income businesses. There are CDFIs of all sizes operating across the country that can offer an efficient, effective, and equitable distribution of Community Revitalization Fund resources. The Biden-Harris administration explicitly acknowledged the importance of CDFIs in meeting the program’s intended goals in both the June 1 fact sheet released on the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre and the recent Community Revitalization Fund program fact sheet.

2. **Community Revitalization Fund resources should primarily finance non-housing community assets that are in proximity to affordable housing.** Community Cornerstone Projects – like health care clinics, parks, grocery stores, local ethnic media, workforce development or other essential community resources – are the amenities and connective tissue that communities need to thrive, but they are also the projects that tend to lack conventional financial products or markets. The Community Revitalization Fund is distinct from other federal programs in that it prioritizes fueling the planning and connective tissue between people, places, and projects without prescribing a one-size-fits-all approach. However, to ensure Community Revitalization Fund resources are anchored in a local strategy that prioritizes the community’s long-term affordability to families at all levels of the income scale – including extremely low-income households and households living in rural persistent poverty communities – awardees must demonstrate that the Community Revitalization Fund resources will be distributed in connection with a local housing or revitalization strategy. For example, CDFIs may partner with a local public housing authority (PHA) or housing finance agency (HFA) to integrate the Community Revitalization Fund with local housing plans. Awardees must also work with communities to affirmatively mitigate forces of gentrification and displacement of existing residents that can result from increased investment.

3. **Funds should be flexible to account for the time and resources necessary to engage in truly equitable development efforts.** Low-income communities across the country face compounding discrimination and inequities that result in deep-seated barriers to opportunity. While the outcomes are most harmful to people of color, each community faces its own unique circumstances and history that must be addressed at a hyper-local level. Yet each community will have varying degrees of capacity and resources to take on this work. To be truly equitable, Community Revitalization Fund resources must provide maximum flexibility to facilitate engagement with local residents and finance whatever it is that the community needs to build local power and wealth. The Community Revitalization Fund should provide both planning and implementation grants, as well as capital for investments in physical assets and amenities, that is deployed through CDFIs and leveraged with additional public and private dollars.

The nation is in urgent need of investments to build up an aging and limited stock of affordable housing, as has been proposed in Chairwoman Waters’ Housing Is Infrastructure Act. The Community Revitalization Fund is a necessary investment to ensure these housing resources are connected to broader civic infrastructure and are positioned to truly advance opportunity and build local wealth.

We thank you for your attention to this important program.

Sincerely,
A&C Grants and Communications LLC
Access Plus Capital
ACT! Albany Community Together, Inc.
African American Alliance of CDFI CEOs
Appalachian Community Capital
Authority Collective
BARHII
Blueprint Publishing Company
BRIDGE Housing
Build Healthy Places Network
C&C Publications - The Times Weekly, Media
CAMEO – California Association for Micro
Enterprise Opportunity
Capital Impact Partners
Carolina Call
CDC Small Business Finance
CDFI Coalition
Center for the Study of Social Policy
Cinnaire
City Heights Community Development
Corporation
Common Ground Development
Community Development Corporation of Utah
Community Preservation Corporation
Community Reinvestment Fund, USA
The Community Times / The Times Upstate
Newspapers
Consensus Housing Partners LLC
C. Spengler Strategies
Culleywood Capital
Enterprise Community Partners
First Children’s Finance
Free Press Action Fund
GECU
Genesis LA Economic Growth Corporation
Greene County Democrat (Weekly Newspaper)
The Guild
Hmong Times Newspaper
HOPE (Hope Enterprise Corporation / Hope Credit Union / Hope Policy Institute)
Housing Partnership Network
Housing Trust Silicon Valley
Houston Style Magazine
IFF
Impact Loan Fund
Inclusiv
Insight News
Just Media
Lendistry
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)
Mercy Housing
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers
Minority Print Media, L.L.C.
Multicultural Media
National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders (NAAHL)
National Affordable Housing Trust
National Community Investment Fund
National Community Stabilization Trust
National Housing Conference
Natural Capital Investment Fund Inc.
NewWest Community Capital
The NHP Foundation
Nonprofit Finance Fund
Northern Maine Development Corporation
One Roof Community Housing
Opportunity Finance Network
Page Hospitality Management, LLC
Paradigm Communications T/A Richmond Free Press
Partners for Education
Partners for Rural Transformation
Pathway Lending
People Trust
Piedmont Housing Alliance
PODER
PolicyLink
Portfolio Advisory Board, Adrian Dominican Sisters
Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH)
Purpose Built Communities
Pyramid Federal Credit Union
RECONOMICS Institute
Reinvestment Fund
Renaissance Community Loan Fund
Retirement Housing Foundation
Rising Tide Community Loan Fund
Rural Community Assistance Corporation
Sewn Arts
Solar and Energy Loan Fund (SELF)
Somali American Community
Sosobone Media Network
Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF)
St. Louis Argus
StriveTogether
Tennessee Tribune Newspaper
The Community Builders
TruFund Financial Services, Inc.
Urban Broadcast Association of America
Ventureneer
The Wei LLC
The Westside Gazette