

**Chairman Susan Collins Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies**

**Markup of the FY2020 Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, and Related
Agencies Appropriations Act**

September 17, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

Last month, Congress passed a two-year budget agreement that provides a framework for moving the appropriations bills, avoids sequestration, and prohibits the inclusion of any poison pill riders. Thanks to bipartisan cooperation on this subcommittee, Sen. Reed and I, with your help, have drafted a bill that meets these requirements and accommodates the priorities of many members. We received input from 75 Senators with more than 950 requests, each of which we carefully evaluated. As has been the case in previous years, the most frequently requested programs included the BUILD grants, F.A.A.'s contract towers program, and HUD's C.D.B.G. program, all of which happened to be priorities of mine as well. We have rejected the President's proposal to eliminate the C.D.B.G. program, a flexible and worthwhile program that is the catalyst for community development and job creation throughout the country.

The allocation for this year's bill is \$74.3 billion, which is \$3.2 billion above current funding levels. However, we were faced with a \$2.3 billion cost increase for rental assistance due to ever-increasing rent prices across the country, as well as a \$2.1 billion reduction in receipts from F.H.A. that offset our allocation. Fully funding the renewal of housing assistance for low-income seniors and other vulnerable populations, such as youth and veterans who are homeless, remains a priority for this subcommittee.

Another priority for us is aviation safety, particularly in light of the two crashes of the Boeing 737-MAX aircraft. In July, the subcommittee held an oversight hearing and examined the F.A.A.'s aircraft certification process and the use of delegation authority. As a result, the bill includes increased funding for aviation safety programs, and requires the F.A.A. to address all recommendations from the various investigations and audits currently underway. The report includes numerous provisions requiring the F.A.A. to improve its aircraft certification process, and I am sure we will have more work to do once we receive the results of those investigations.

Continuing the focus from the last two years, this bill provides robust infrastructure investment for our nation's highways, bridges, transit, rail, airport, and ports. The bill once again prioritizes the effective and popular BUILD grant program by providing \$1 billion. Building on the success of bridge funding over the last two years, the bill provides \$1.25 billion for bridges that are not in good condition, of which there are many in this nation. I am also pleased to announce the bill provides \$300 million for the third maritime training ship for our state maritime academies, which will provide Maine Maritime Academy with a critical training asset for its students. We have in the past two years funded training ships for academies in New York and Massachusetts,

so we've been following the list that MARAD has given us in terms of the age of the training vessels.

For HUD, the bill maintains funding for the C.D.B.G. and HOME programs and provides \$2.8 billion for Homeless Assistance Grants, with a focus on homeless youth and survivors of domestic violence. In addition, we provide \$20 million for youth who are exiting the foster care program who are at great risk of becoming homeless. We also continue funding for housing vouchers for the successful VASH program. That program has reduced the number of homeless veterans by 49 percent since 2010; it is a real success story. In addition, this bill provides \$25 million to fund a new program, authorized in the SUPPORT Act, that provides housing for individuals exiting an addiction recovery treatment program.

The lack of affordable housing across our nation is harming communities. It is estimated that by 2025, more than 15 million Americans will be spending half of their income on rent. This bill provides robust funding for Section 8 and other public housing programs that make a real difference in people's lives.

For our aging population, the bill provides \$696 million for housing for seniors, of which \$10 million will be used to enable seniors to "age-in-place" by remaining in their own homes and doing simple, cost effective innovations and changes that can help them remain at home. The bill also increases funding for lead hazard grants to \$290 million in an effort to accelerate the progress to eliminate dangerous childhood lead exposure, a problem in many states with older housing stock, such as Maine and Rhode Island.

This bill does not contain controversial riders in the hope that it can be marked up and moved across the floor in a bipartisan manner. I urge my colleagues to support the THUD bill today and on Thursday at the full Committee markup, and again I want to thank my ranking member in particular, but all the members of the Subcommittee, for their input.

In keeping with the longstanding tradition of the Subcommittee, I would ask that members refrain from offering amendments until the full Committee markup on Thursday, but Senator Reed and I would appreciate knowing of any amendments that you may have as soon as possible so that we may begin working with you.

Again, my thanks to Senator Reed, all members of the subcommittee, and our staffs for working together to produce what is truly a bipartisan bill.

With that, let me turn to my friend, Senator Reed, for his opening remarks.

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