June 8, 2018

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Duffy and Ranking Member Cleaver,

On behalf of the more than 400,000 members of the American Bar Association, I am writing to thank you for holding the June 6, 2018 hearing concerning H.R. 1511, the Homeless Children and Youth Act, and urge your support for this bill.

At a time when an estimated 4.2 million American youth experience homelessness each year, it confounds common sense that all but one federal homeless program may consider a child to be eligible for assistance, yet leave that child exposed to dangerous living conditions because he or she is not somehow homeless enough, or homeless in the right way, to receive assistance. These young people too often leave behind the only life they know to escape physical abuse or a home gripped by substance abuse. For these young people, the system should provide an unbroken continuum of care, and federal programs are designed to work that way. But complex and confusing restrictions at the Department of Housing and Urban Development preclude this result.

The American Bar Association applauds Reps. Stivers and Loebsack for their proposed solution to the problem, H.R. 1511, the Homeless Children and Youth Act, which would allow caseworkers to determine on a case-by-case basis whether a child who is considered homeless for another federal program may also be eligible for assistance from HUD. We understand the concerns expressed at the hearing over the limited resources to address different kinds of homelessness, but this should not stand in the way of removing the legal barriers that keep homeless children in crisis and invisible. As Rep. Stivers observed, if we cannot accurately determine the need, then Congress cannot allocate sufficient resources. We urge the subcommittee to act favorably on H.R. 1511 so that the bill can be considered by the House and ultimately enacted during this Congress.

Sincerely,

Hilarie Bass
President

cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, House Financial Services Committee