

# Tribal Access to Homeless Assistance Act of 2019

Senator Tina Smith (D-Minn) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

A study commissioned by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) found that there are between 42,000 and 85,000 homeless Native Americans living on tribal lands.<sup>1</sup> Homelessness on tribal lands often leads to families “doubling up” with neighbors; sixteen percent of American Indian and Alaska Native households experience overcrowding, compared to only two percent of all households in the United States. Despite the prevalence of homelessness in Indian Country, Tribes and tribally designated housing entities are unable to access the Homeless Assistance Grants offered by HUD.

## What is a Continuum of Care?

- HUD requires communities to take a strategic and coordinated approach to homeless prevention and housing services for homeless families and individuals.
- Communities must organize under the umbrella of a local or regional planning system, called a Continuum of Care (CoC), before submitting applications for McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Grants through HUD.
- CoCs, which represent geographic areas, coordinate outreach and intake of the local homeless population, emergency shelter services, transitional housing with supportive services, and permanent supportive housing for individuals and families.
- Within a CoC’s jurisdiction, nonprofits, local governments, or other eligible applicants can submit funding requests for specific projects or programs through the CoC planning body.

When individuals and families are homeless, it is nearly impossible to find a meaningful job, go to school, and otherwise engage with the community. The *Tribal Access to Homeless Assistance Act* would make Tribes and tribally designated housing entities eligible for federal funding so they can more effectively combat homelessness.

## Specifically, the bill would:

1. Make Tribes and tribally designated housing entities eligible to submit funding requests through their local Continuum of Care, and
2. Make Tribes and tribally designated housing entities eligible to take on the administration and coordination of homeless assistance grants within their geographic area.

**Endorsing organizations include:** Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Minnesota Tribal Collaborative to Prevent & End Homelessness, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless, Minnesota Engagement on Shelter & Housing (MESH), MN Indian Women’s Resource Center, Lutheran Social Services of MN, The Link, Minnesota Community Care, Twin Cities Housing Development Corporation, St. Paul/Ramsey Continuum of Care, Northwest Minnesota Continuum of Care, Northwest Indian Community Development Center, Minnesotans Standing Together to End Poverty (MNSTEP), Hearth Connection, Solid Ground, Red Lake Homeless Shelter, Theresa Living Center, Radius Health, Canvas Health

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/HNAIHomelessNeeds.pdf>