Dear Councilmember(s) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

I write to ask you to support the Mayor’s plans for a $25 million bond issue to preserve affordable housing in the capital expenditure budget, the $10 million allocation for the Barnes Fund NOW without delay or at the risk of being cut.  It is urgent that Nashville do more. Our neighbor families are being pushed into poverty and homelessness by the lack of affordable housing.

1)   The need: Nashville has 23,000 people experiencing homelessness, including 8,000 schoolchildren (the some 2,300 count you hear in the news is a 6 hour, one night count that doesn’t include most of the children). But this is not just about those experiencing homelessness. HALF of Nashville’s WORKERS make less than $31,000 per year. It takes 3 full time minimum wage jobs to afford a $750 one bedroom apartment—and there are few of those. Every council district had over 40% of cost burdened renters. As of 2015, there is a need for 18,000 units of affordable according to the Mayor’s recent report. According to the GNAA, last year Nashville had some 16,000 rental units under construction, but fewer than 600 were affordable, and we lost more than 2000 affordable units for the second year in a row. People are being driven from the city they have lived in for generations, into deep poverty, or onto the streets because they cannot afford housing.

2)   I support the Mayor’s planned $25 million bond issue to preserve affordable housing, the $10 million for the Barnes Fund, and the proposed Land Trust. Council should pass these, but they do not go far enough.

3)   Housing should be a priority: affordable housing will allow children to do better in school, and reduce pressures that produce hunger, medical crises, homelessness, and crime, all costly to the city. Studies have shown over and over that housing the chronic homeless saves $21,000 per year, and with 23,000 people unhoused, this is a savings of $483 million per year. It would nearly pay for the housing needs in one year. Even at half the savings, it would pay for itself in two years.

Nashville has spent more than enough in tax increment financing and bond issues on luxury hotels for tourists, luxury condos for the wealthy, and sports stadiums—it must be a city for ALL of its people. It is time to stop playing games with the lives of our friends and neighbors.