West Coast mayors ask Congress for more help with homeless crisis

The mayors of the West Coast's major cities are asking Congress for more funding to deal with homelessness and housing.

West Coast mayors sent a letter to members of Congress Wednesday asking for substantially more funding to address the homeless and housing crises in their cities.

"While we celebrate the economic recovery of the past several years, that recovery has not benefitted everyone equally," says the letter from the mayors of Seattle, Portland, Eugene, San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego and Honolulu to the Washington, Oregon, California and Hawaii congressional delegations.

"Increasingly, our most vulnerable residents are being left behind, as their incomes remain stagnant while housing prices dramatically increase. The result is a growing number of families who are either homeless or on the verge of homelessness."

Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and King County Executive Dow Constantine in November proclaimed states of emergency to address homelessness. Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles officials have done the same, as has the governor of Hawaii.

"We have seen increases in the number of homeless children in our schools, the number of disabled and elderly people sleeping on our sidewalks; and more families living in shelters and dangerous overcrowded housing situations," the letter from the mayors says, adding, "These are not problems we can solve alone. Solving affordable housing and homeless crises requires strong federal partnership."

The letter asks Congress to fully fund President Obama's Tenant Based Rental Assistance and Homeless Assistance Grant budget proposals, increase funding for the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program by $75 million and the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program by $200 million, and increase Community Development Block Grant funding by 20 percent, among other changes.