

[Print on Organization's Letterhead]

[Date]

[Name of Campaign]

[Campaign Headquarters Address]

Re: 2016 Election Questionnaire

Dear [Name]:

Today, the affordable housing crisis continues to reach new heights. More than 20 million families cannot afford their homes, including 11.4 million—or [one in four](#)—renter households that spend more than half of their incomes on rent. In our [\[city/county/state\]](#), [\[# \]](#) renters are cost-burdened and [\[# \]](#) people experience homelessness on the average night. Among those [hardest-hit](#) are low-income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, veterans, and people experiencing homelessness. These families must make desperate tradeoffs between keeping a roof over their heads and buying food or medicine. Recent reports show that nearly every community in our nation—in [urban, rural, and suburban areas alike](#)—is impacted.

As a nominee for [\[Elected Office\]](#), [\[Organization Name\]](#) invites you to complete the attached **2016 Election Questionnaire** on key affordable housing issues. All major nominees for [\[Elected Office\]](#)—regardless of party affiliation—have been invited to complete the questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to educate and inform communities on each candidate's stance on the housing issues directly impacting them. *It is not meant to serve as an endorsement of/for any particular candidate and/or political party.*

In [recent polling](#), 76 percent of likely voters in the 2016 presidential election stated that they would be more likely to support candidates who made housing affordability a focus of their campaigns and a priority in government. Six in 10 likely voters called housing affordability a key issue for them in the upcoming elections. For many Americans, this issue is personal: almost half of the survey's respondents who identified as likely voters stated that an inability to meet rent or mortgage payments had been a problem for themselves or others close to them in the past 12 months.

[\[Add a short paragraph about your organization and its mission\]](#).

Please send your completed questionnaire to [\[Point of Contact\]](#) at [\[Email Address\]](#) by [\[Date\]](#). Upon receipt, we will post your response on our websites at [\[Website Address\]](#) and use social media to connect the public to your completed questionnaire.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

2016 Election Questionnaire

[Questions for all candidates]

1) The Availability of Affordable Housing

More than a third of all U.S. families are cost-burdened, paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. Nearly 17 percent are severely cost-burdened and pay half their income on rent. In our [state/county/city], [#] renters are cost-burdened, and [#] pay more than half of their monthly income on rent. The lack of supply—especially for those with the lowest incomes—has only made this problem worse. What is the role of government in addressing housing affordability issues and what would you do to encourage the production of more affordable homes for these families?

2) Mobility and Discrimination

According to research from Raj Chetty, moving a poor child out of a high-poverty community to a more affluent community increases access to college, decreases their chances of becoming a single parent, and increases future earnings. Despite the benefits, many low-income families face barriers to moving to high-opportunity areas, including discrimination based on source of income and lack of access to housing assistance. What actions would you take to encourage mobility and stop source of income discrimination?

3) Revitalizing Distressed Communities

Many low-income neighborhoods often lack access to employment, good schools, thriving local businesses, healthy food, and healthcare. How would you support public and private investments in housing development, preservation, and community development as part of a long-term strategy to revitalize distressed communities?

4) Housing Intersections

Having an accessible, affordable place to call home is critical to improving education, health, and economic outcomes. What housing-based strategy would you use to address the education, health, transportation, and economic needs of low-income families?

5) Homelessness

On any given night, more than a half million people experienced homelessness—sleeping outside or in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program. A recent study of U.S. cities found that 25 percent of all requests for emergency shelter went unmet. [If available, include a statistic about homelessness in your area]. What will you do to address homelessness?

6) Housing Challenges In Rural America

Although millions of rural families have trouble paying their rent or mortgage, rural housing issues are often overlooked. Moreover, resources used by rural communities have been cut significantly. How would you prioritize the housing needs of rural communities in our [State, County]?

[Questions for federal candidates only]

7) Housing as a Safety Net Program

Unlike other federal safety net programs like Social Security and Medicare, federal affordable housing assistance is not guaranteed, even if a family qualifies for the program. Today, just one in four households that are eligible get the assistance they need. What specifically will you do to expand access to this assistance?

8) Low Spending Caps

Since 2011, the low spending caps required by the Budget Control Act have led to deep funding cuts for critical affordable housing and community development programs, depriving families and neighborhoods of investments they need to thrive. The threat of sequestration—or across-the-board spending cuts—returns in 2017. What will you do to lift these spending caps and repeal the Budget Control Act?

9) Legislative and Regulatory Changes to Federal Housing Programs

Several proposals to change federally assisted housing programs have been introduced over the past sessions of Congress. How, if at all, would you propose to change federally assisted housing programs that serve low-income households, including the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, Section 8 housing vouchers, and public housing?

10) Preservation of Affordable Housing

The preservation of existing affordable housing—including public housing and developments receiving project-based rental assistance—is a critical and cost-effective component in addressing the housing crisis. However, chronic underfunding has led to a more than \$30 billion backlog in deferred maintenance costs for public housing alone. Communities like [cities in the state] are in severe need of updates for public housing developments, as well as developments receiving project-based rental assistance. What would be your plan to preserve this critical resource for the long-term?