

# 2023 Public Policy Priorities

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**N**LIHC works with Members of Congress, the Administration, affordable housing and community development organizations and advocates, low-income renters, and other stakeholders across the nation to ensure that the lowest-income people – including people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, people experiencing homelessness, and others – have a safe, affordable, and accessible place to call home.

In 2023, NLIHC will focus on ongoing housing challenges facing renters with the lowest incomes and people experiencing homelessness as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and rampant inflation. NLIHC will also advocate our long-term policy priorities, including:

- Ensuring federal responses to the pandemic and other disasters are fair and equitable;
- Protecting, monitoring, and expanding the national Housing Trust Fund;
- Preserving and increasing resources for federal affordable housing programs serving extremely low-income families;
- Ensuring protections for low-income renters;
- Promoting equitable access to affordable housing; and
- Championing anti-poverty solutions.

## PROTECT AND EXPAND THE NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND

The national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) is the first new federal housing resource in a generation exclusively targeted to help build, preserve, and rehabilitate housing for people with the lowest incomes. NLIHC, its members, and other stakeholders played a critical role in the creation of the Housing Trust Fund in the “Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008.”

While the HTF has been provided with \$2.6 billion to date, far more resources are needed to address the severe shortage of housing affordable

and available to people most impacted by America’s housing crisis: those with the lowest incomes. NLIHC leads the [Housing Trust Fund Implementation and Policy Group](#), a coalition of national advocates committed to protecting and expanding this new resource.

In 2023, NLIHC will continue to build congressional support to increase funding to the Housing Trust Fund through legislative opportunities.

## PRESERVE AND INCREASE RESOURCES FOR FEDERAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS

Any new federal housing resources must be targeted to address the underlying cause of the affordable housing crisis: the severe shortage of affordable homes for people with extremely low incomes.

### Increasing Federal Budgets for Affordable Housing

Despite a proven track record, federal housing programs are chronically underfunded. Today, just one in four families eligible for federal housing assistance receives the help they need. NLIHC leads a continuum of affordable housing and community development organizations through the [Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding \(CHCDF\)](#), a coalition of 75 national and regional organizations dedicated to ensuring the highest allocation of resources possible to support affordable housing, homelessness, and community development.

In 2023, NLIHC will advocate for increasing resources for key affordable housing programs, including Housing Choice Vouchers, public housing, project-based rental assistance, homeless assistance grants, and legal aid to prevent evictions, among many other programs, through the appropriations process.

## Expanding and Reforming Resources in the Tax Code

NLIHC supports the creation of a new, innovative renters' tax credit to help the lowest-income families afford a place to call home. NLIHC supports efforts to expand and reform the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program to better serve households with the greatest, clearest needs. Any expansion of LIHTC should be paired with reforms to allow the program to increase its ability to serve extremely low-income renters and encourage development in challenging markets, like rural communities and tribal lands. Any effort to divert scarce federal resources to address the limited housing challenges faced by higher income households is wasteful and misguided.

## Increasing Resources to Build and Preserve Housing in Tribal and Rural Areas

Native Americans living in tribal areas have some of the most pressing housing needs in the United States, with exceptionally high poverty rates, low incomes, overcrowding, lack of plumbing and heat, and unique development issues. Despite the pressing need for safe, decent homes, federal investments in affordable housing on tribal lands are historically underfunded.

NLIHC works with tribal leaders and advocates to increase housing resources for tribal nations with the greatest needs, improve data collection on tribal housing needs, and reduce federal barriers to housing development. In 2023, there may be an opportunity to expand tribal housing resources through appropriations and other legislative opportunities.

NLIHC also works to preserve and expand affordable housing available in rural areas by supporting funding for USDA Rural Development programs and through opportunities to preserve the agency's rental housing portfolio.

## ENSURE PROTECTIONS FOR LOW-INCOME RENTERS

### Opposing Efforts to Cut Housing Benefits

NLIHC opposes efforts to cut housing benefits through rent increases, work requirements, time limits, and other restrictions. These reforms are neither cost effective nor a solution to the very real issue of poverty impacting millions of families living in subsidized housing or in need of housing. NLIHC leads the [Preventing Benefit Cuts](#) coalition to educate Members of Congress on proven solutions to ending housing poverty, including expanding—not slashing—investments in affordable homes, job training, education, childcare, and other policies to help families thrive.

### Opposing Anti-Immigrant Proposals

NLIHC opposes proposals that deter eligible immigrant families from seeking housing benefits or that force immigrant families currently receiving housing benefits to forego that assistance or face eviction. NLIHC co-leads the [Keep Families Together](#) campaign with the National Housing Law Project to oppose proposals to prohibit “mixed-status” families from living in public and other subsidized housing at HUD and USDA. NLIHC also participates in the [Protecting Immigrant Families](#) campaign, which opposed a harmful rule issued under the Trump Administration that would have made it easier for the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to declare certain immigrants to be a “public charge,” denying them admission to the U.S., and possibly threatening deportation. The Biden Administration a [final “public charge” regulation](#) issued in September 2022 that added critical protections to immigrant families' access to social safety net programs, including housing.

In 2023, these coalitions will work to expand access to housing for immigrant households.

### Preventing Evictions and Housing Instability

During the coronavirus pandemic, NLIHC advocated for [essential resources and protections](#) to address the health and housing needs of

people experiencing homelessness and low-income renters. Through our End Rental Arrears to Stop Evictions (ERASE) project, NLIHC tracks, analyzes, and shares best practices for emergency rental assistance programs. More information is available on [NLIHC's ERASE website](#).

NLIHC advocates for the creation of a permanent emergency rental assistance program, building on the infrastructure created during the pandemic to keep families stably housed. NLIHC advocates for the “Eviction Crisis Act,” which would provide direct financial assistance to extremely low-income households facing an unexpected economic crisis that threatens their housing stability. Temporary assistance can stabilize households experiencing sudden economic shocks before it leads to eviction and, in worst cases, homelessness, which can be traumatizing and require more prolonged and extensive housing assistance. NLIHC supports legislation advocating for “just cause” eviction standards, a national right to counsel, increased funding for legal aid, and other renter protections.

### **Promoting Healthy Housing**

All low-income renters deserve to live in decent, accessible, and affordable high-quality homes. NLIHC supports efforts to improve housing conditions in federally assisted housing, including providing at least \$70 billion to address the capital needs backlog in public housing, efforts to revise Real Estate Assessment Center inspection processes, and addressing lead-based paint, carbon monoxide poisoning, and other unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions.

### **Protecting Federally Assisted Residents**

For decades, Congress has failed to provide adequate funding to maintain public housing in good condition, and as a result, public housing faces a more than \$70 billion backlog in capital improvement needs. In response, HUD has sought to “reposition” public housing by reducing the number of homes in the public housing stock through the demolition or disposition of public housing, voluntary conversion of public housing

to vouchers, and the retention of assets after a Declaration of Trust release. NLIHC monitors these efforts and those of the Rental Assistance Demonstration Program, which converts public housing to Section 8 funding streams, to help ensure that current and future public housing residents are not negatively impacted and that resident protections and other requirements are enforced.

In 2023, NLIHC will work to secure major investments to repair and rehabilitate public housing, and to advance policies that protect renters living in public housing.

### **Protecting Survivors of Domestic Violence**

NLIHC supports federal protections to ensure survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking have access to safe, accessible homes and the ability to leave an unsafe housing situation without risking possible homelessness. NLIHC supports legislation to bar federally assisted housing providers from screening out applicants or evicting tenants because of the criminal activity of an abuser and to prohibit retaliation against a tenant for calling law enforcement or emergency assistance for help.

## **PROMOTE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND OPPORTUNITY**

NLIHC believes in just communities, where everyone has access to economic and educational opportunities, as well as affordable housing. Evidence shows that access to stable, affordable housing in communities of opportunity has broad, positive impacts. It can lead to better health and education outcomes and higher lifetime earnings, especially for children.

### **Advancing Fair Housing**

For more than 50 years, the “Fair Housing Act” has barred housing discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or disability and required communities take active steps to end racial segregation. In 2023, NLIHC will continue to lead efforts to advance fair housing and other important

regulations, such as the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule, the 2013 Disparate Impact rule, and the 2016 Equal Access in Accordance with an Individual's Gender Identity rule. These policies help promote more equitable communities, prevent hidden discrimination through biased policies or practices, and ensure appropriate access to services regardless of race, sexual orientation or gender identity.

NLIHC advocates for the enactment of the "Fair Housing Improvement Act," which would expand the "Fair Housing Act of 1968" to prohibit housing discrimination on the basis of "military status," "veteran status," and "source of income," making it easier for low-income households, veterans, and servicemembers to access affordable housing in the communities of their choice.

NLIHC supports increasing mobility opportunities through new allocations of mobility vouchers and expanded mobility counseling, and continued implementation of HUD Small Area Fair Market Rents in certain metropolitan areas that protect current and future tenants.

### **Achieving Criminal-Legal System Reform**

The United States incarcerates its citizens at a shockingly high rate and nearly one in three Americans has a criminal record. Because of bias inherent to the criminal-legal system, Black and Latino people, people with a disability, and members of the LGBTQ community are disproportionately impacted by the criminal legal system. Formerly incarcerated individuals who return to their communities face barriers to accessing affordable housing, putting them at risk of homelessness and recidivism. NLIHC advocates for safe, stable, affordable and accessible housing for those who have been involved in the criminal or juvenile legal system so that formerly incarcerated people and those with conviction and arrest histories can successfully reintegrate into their communities and make the most of their second chance. In 2023, there will be opportunities to advance these priorities through legislative and administrative reforms.

### **Advancing Housing First**

NLIHC advocates to end the criminalization of homelessness and advance Housing First, a bipartisan, evidence-based practice to ending homelessness that prioritizes access to stable, affordable, accessible housing with voluntary supportive services, without imposing prerequisites. Housing First is a flexible model that can be adapted to address the unique needs in local communities and is tailored to the challenges facing individuals.

Misguided efforts to undermine Housing First, criminalize homelessness, impose punitive requirements, and prevent the development of affordable housing are counterproductive and will make it even harder to people to exit homelessness. Nationwide, people experiencing homelessness are targeted, arrested, and jailed under laws that criminalize homelessness by making illegal basic acts that are necessary for life. These laws are ineffective, expensive, and often violate homeless persons' civil and human rights. NLIHC will work in 2023 to ensure federal policies discourage local governments from criminalizing homelessness and advance Housing First models.

### **Creating Greater Opportunities for Employment**

NLIHC supports efforts to improve HUD's Section 3 program, which has the potential to serve as a robust resource for job creation in low-income communities. Section 3 aims to ensure jobs, training, and contracting opportunities associated with HUD-assisted projects go to low-income people, including residents of federally assisted housing, and to the businesses that hire them. NLIHC also supports an expansion of the Family Self Sufficiency program, linking HUD residents to services and educational opportunities that can lead to improved employment and earned income.

## **ENSURE FEDERAL RESPONSES TO DISASTERS ARE FAIR AND EQUITABLE**

NLIHC leads the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) of 850 national, state, and local organizations, including many working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters. We work to ensure a complete and equitable housing recovery for the lowest-income and most marginalized households, including people of color, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, seniors, families with children, immigrants, and other individuals and their communities.

The coalition will work in 2023 to advance a comprehensive set of recommendations for [Congress](#), [FEMA](#), and [HUD](#) on disaster housing recovery issues. We will work to promote policy [recommendations](#) to overcome [barriers](#) to an equitable disaster housing recovery, and advocate for increased funding to respond to the needs of disaster survivors with the lowest incomes.

## **CHAMPION ANTI-POVERTY SOLUTIONS**

Beyond ensuring access to affordable housing, NLIHC is strongly committed to enacting legislation and protecting resources that alleviate poverty. NLIHC supports efforts to protect and expand vital safety net programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, unemployment insurance, Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, the “Affordable Care Act,” Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Income, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Moreover, NLIHC strongly supports efforts to increase the minimum wage and to target federal resources to communities with persistent poverty.