



NATIONAL LOW INCOME  
HOUSING COALITION

---

# CAPITOL HILL DAY

---

2026 ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



NLIHC.ORG

# CAPITOL HILL DAY OVERVIEW



March 2026

Dear advocates,

Since we last came together, our country has been through hardship and heartbreak: mass layoffs of the federal workers responsible for administering HUD programs, funding freezes upending Fair Housing enforcement, and vicious attacks on our immigrant neighbors that have pulled families apart and cost people their lives.

**But where chaos goes, resistance follows.** From D.C. to Los Angeles, Minneapolis to Maine, and beyond, people have stood alongside their neighbors to demand an end to the policies terrorizing their communities and jeopardizing their futures. And our collective voice makes a difference: together, we have protected funding for rental assistance, homelessness services, and deeply affordable housing; stopped the Trump Administration from upending decades of best practices in homelessness response; and defended access to rental and homelessness assistance.

**We must keep showing up, and meet this critical moment with the urgency and courage it demands.** Millions of people rely on HUD programs to keep a roof over their heads, and thousands of communities depend on HUD funding for needed projects and services, like constructing new or preserving existing affordable housing, and providing shelter, housing, and wrap-around services to people experiencing homelessness. Millions more are struggling to make ends meet, and hundreds of thousands of people – including people with disabilities, families with young children, members of the low-wage workforce, veterans, and older adults – experience homelessness on any given night.

**The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) welcomes advocates to participate in our Capitol Hill Day on Friday, March 13.** Together, we will not only defend vital programs that help millions afford the cost of housing, but also lay the groundwork for policies that will help address the affordable housing and homelessness crisis at its root. These solutions include ensuring rental assistance is universally available to all households in need; expanding and preserving the supply of homes affordable and accessible to people with the lowest incomes; and strengthening and enforcing renter protections.

This toolkit includes key resources to help you participate, including factsheets on NLIHC's legislative priorities and resources to help you have a successful visit with your members of Congress.

**Your voice and your story matter.** It is important for members of Congress to hear from you about the impact of federal programs and policies, and why everyone needs a safe, affordable, accessible place to call home.

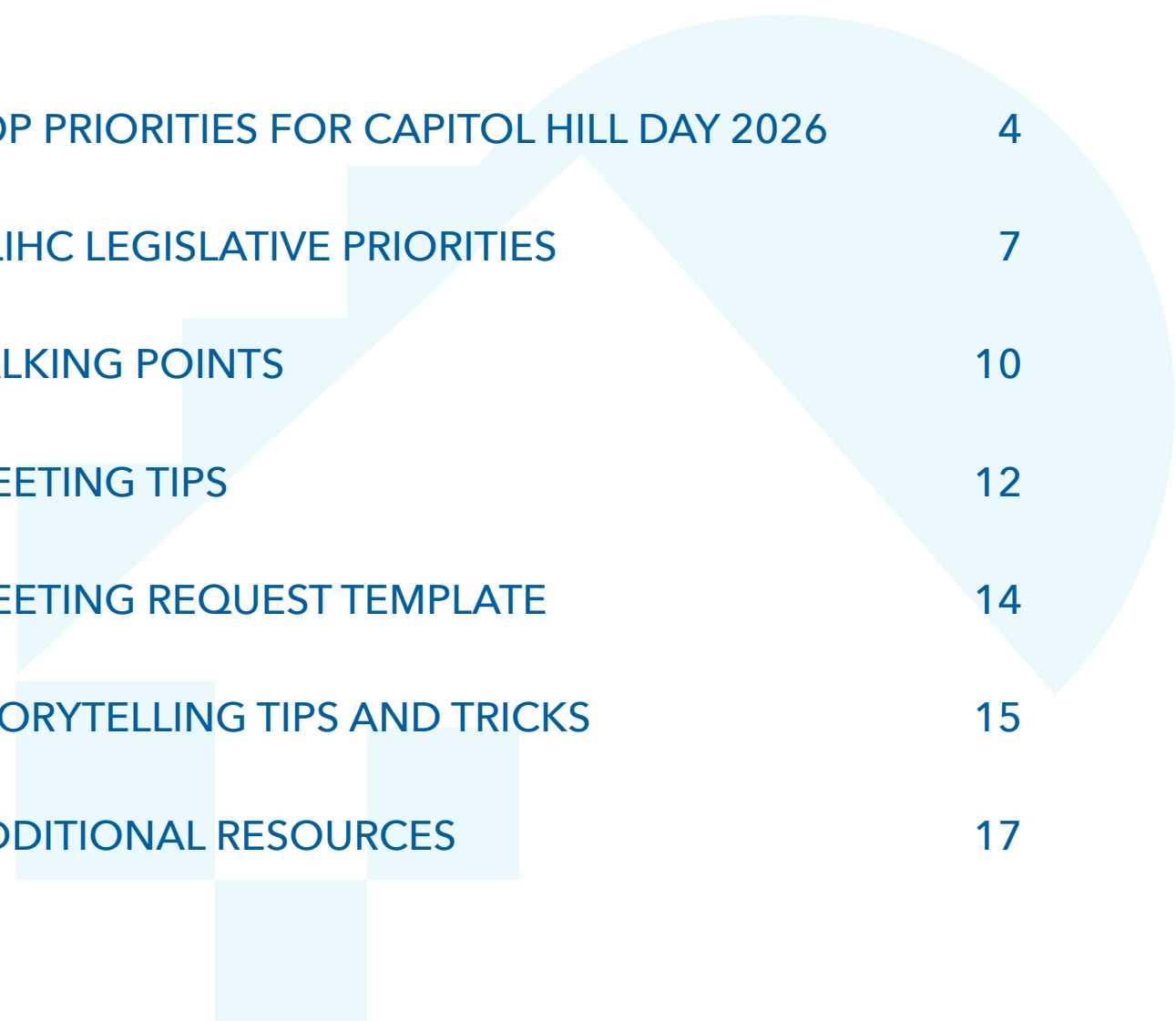
**Thank you for your advocacy!**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Willis", is positioned above the name Renee M. Willis.

**Renee M. Willis**

NLIHC President and CEO

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



TOP PRIORITIES FOR CAPITOL HILL DAY 2026	4
NLIHC LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES	7
TALKING POINTS	10
MEETING TIPS	12
MEETING REQUEST TEMPLATE	14
STORYTELLING TIPS AND TRICKS	15
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	17

# TOP PRIORITIES FOR CAPITOL HILL DAY 2026

In 2026, NLIHC urges all senators and representatives to:

## 1. Ensure the continued operation of HUD programs by protecting congressionally appropriated funding and adequately staffing HUD offices.

Since last year, over 24% of HUD staff have left the department, leaving remaining workers at capacity and threatening their ability to carry out core functions efficiently and effectively. Staff also work under the threat of additional Reductions in Force (RIFs) that would further jeopardize HUD programs. In addition, the Trump Administration has attempted – in some cases, successfully – to unilaterally cancel billions of dollars in federal funding by cutting or freezing federal grants, or through technical tricks like the “[pocket recission](#),” in which the President sends a request to Congress to cancel appropriated funding that is close to expiring before it can be used for other purposes, and without giving Congress adequate time to consider the request.

Consistent, reliable funding and adequate staffing are minimum requirements for HUD to administer federal housing, community development, and homelessness resources to states and local governments, including resources to:

- Provide rental assistance to help low-income households afford their homes.
- Build and preserve affordable rental housing for low-income households.
- Address and prevent homelessness, which reached its highest level on record in 2024.
- Operate and maintain public housing and other affordable housing for millions of seniors, people with disabilities, and families with young children.
- Revitalize neighborhoods, promote economic development, and improve community facilities, including infrastructure and services in low-income communities.
- Reform restrictive zoning and land use regulations that drive up housing costs.
- Investigate and enforce fair housing and civil rights laws.
- Rebuild housing and infrastructure after major disasters and mitigate future harm.

Without access to HUD assistance – whether because of frozen funding or because there are not enough HUD staff to administer programs – shelters would be forced to close their doors, communities would stop construction on new projects to build housing and community centers, households receiving rental assistance would face immediate rent increases and potential evictions, and communities, families and small businesses impacted by disasters would be unable to rebuild.

## 2. Support the highest level of funding possible in fiscal year (FY) 2027.

Lawmakers finalized their fiscal year (FY) 2026 spending bill for HUD programs in early February, providing \$77.3 billion for HUD programs – an over \$7.2 billion increase from the previous fiscal year! This increase is significantly more than the \$3.3 billion increase provided in the Senate’s FY26 budget; the House’s budget would have cut funding for HUD by \$2.2 billion. This historic increase is thanks to the tireless work of advocates, who weighed-in with their members of Congress to demand additional funding for HUD’s affordable housing, homelessness, and community development programs.

With the final FY26 spending bill finalized, members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will turn their attention to FY27. The Trump Administration is expected to release its budget request for FY27 in March; like their FY26 budget request, the administration is expected to call for deep cuts to HUD programs that would cost hundreds of thousands of households their assistance.



Advocates should urge their members of Congress to reject any attempts to cut HUD funding, and to instead ensure the highest possible funding levels in FY27, including:

- Full funding to renew all existing Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) contracts, plus funding to expand the program to an additional 250,000 households as a down payment on affordability to match the recent expansion of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).
- Full funding for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants program to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- Increased funding for public housing operations and repairs.
- Increased investments in programs that support the construction and preservation of deeply affordable, accessible housing, including Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities, Section 202 Housing for the Elderly, and Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA).
- Maintained funding for HUD's Eviction Prevention Grant Program (EPGP).
- Additional funding for the competitive Tribal housing program, targeted to tribes with the greatest needs.

### 3. Oppose harmful policies that restrict access to housing assistance.

Advocates should urge their members of Congress to oppose new barriers to housing assistance that would leave even more people at risk of housing insecurity and homelessness.

The Trump administration has or will soon release harmful new regulations that limit access to HUD-assisted housing and homelessness services and make it more difficult for currently assisted families to remain in their homes:

- **"Mixed-Status" Rule:** A [proposed change](#) to HUD's longstanding "mixed-status" rule would force families with "mixed" immigration status – families in which at least one member is either a US citizen or an immigrant with HUD-eligible immigration status, and at least one member is not – to either separate or give up their assistance, putting them at risk of missed rent, eviction, and in worst cases, homelessness.
- **Work Requirements and Time Limits on HUD-Assisted Households:** A [forthcoming](#) proposed rule would give Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and HUD-assisted housing providers the ability to implement work requirements and time limits on households receiving HUD assistance. It could open the door for state legislatures to require PHAs in their states to adopt these harmful practices.
- **30-Day Eviction Notice Requirement for Public Housing and PBRA Tenants:** HUD is expected to release a proposed rule that would [rescind](#) the 2024 HUD rule imposing a 30-day notice requirement for families facing eviction for nonpayment of rent who are living in public housing or housing supported by project-based rental assistance (PBRA) programs.
- **Equal Access Rule:** HUD Secretary Scott Turner [announced](#) in February 2025 that HUD would no longer enforce its 2016 Equal Access Rule, which requires housing, facilities, and services funded through HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) to ensure equal access to programs for individuals based on their gender identity without intrusive questioning or being asked to provide documentation.

Imposing new time limits or work requirements will not create well-paying jobs and opportunities for financial security; evicting households with mixed immigration status will not address the underlying systemic causes of our housing crisis; and denying trans people access to appropriate shelter and services will not create additional resources for our strained homelessness system. Rather, these proposals will only make housing insecurity and homelessness worse by cutting off access to needed assistance.

## 4. Oppose policies that undermine proven solutions to homelessness.

Advocates should encourage their members of Congress to oppose efforts to undermine proven, effective solutions to homelessness.

The evidence is clear: housing with voluntary supportive services is the [most effective way](#) to end homelessness. Providing low-barrier housing and tailored services to meet the unique needs of people – including youth and older adults, families, people experiencing chronic homelessness, individuals with substance use disorder, and people with mental health conditions – is an effective and cost-effective way of ending homelessness. Low-barrier housing provides people experiencing homelessness with the stability they need to effectively utilize services and achieve long-term goals, including recovery, family reunification, employment, continued education, and financial stability. Housing with voluntary supportive services has been key to reducing veteran homelessness [by 50%](#) over the last decade.

NLIHC [opposes](#) harmful proposals that would undermine proven solutions to homelessness, upend decades of best practice, and potentially cost people who had previously been experiencing homelessness their assistance, including:

- Potentially harmful changes HUD’s Continuum of Care (CoC) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for FY 2026. Last year, HUD released a [CoC NOFO for FY25](#) that would have made drastic changes to how communities can use federal dollars to respond to the needs of people experiencing homelessness. While this NOFO was [challenged in court](#) and ultimately rescinded, it is likely the administration will try to make similar changes in its FY26 NOFO.
- The Housing PLUS Act (HR 5618 in the 119th Congress) from Representative Andy Barr (R-KY) would force HUD to divert funds away from successful local programs to outdated, ineffective, and costly strategies used by the federal government decades ago before bipartisan members of congress demanded better outcomes and greater accountability for homelessness spending.

# NLIHC LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

NLIHC and our members, partners, and allies will continue building Congressional support for legislation to advance the policy solutions and long-term, large-scale investments needed to end homelessness and housing poverty.

## BIPARTISAN LEGISLATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

[ROAD to Housing Act](#) (S.2651) – Sens. Scott (R-SC) and Warren (D-MA). The “ROAD to Housing Act” includes 40 provisions covering financial literacy, housing supply, manufactured housing, homeownership, program reform, veterans’ housing, and oversight and coordination of housing programs and agencies. It includes several provisions NLIHC supports:

- The **“Reforming Disaster Recovery Act,”** which contains [critical reforms](#) proposed by NLIHC’s Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) members to help ensure the federal government’s long-term disaster recovery program, HUD’s Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, better serves disaster survivors with the lowest incomes.
- The **“Rural Housing Service Reform Act”** would help preserve affordable rental and homeownership opportunities for low-income people and families living in rural areas, cut red tape, and encourage public-private partnerships to increase investment in the country’s rural housing supply ([H.R.4957/S.1260](#); Reps. Nunn (R-IA) and Cleaver (D-MO), and Sens. Smith (D-MN, Rounds (R-SD), Daines (R-MT), Fetterman (D-PA), Crapo (R-ID), Warner (D-VA), Cramer (R-ND), Warnock (D-GA), Shaheen (D-NH), and Moran (R-KS)).
- The **“Reducing Homeless Through Program Reform Act”** includes several reforms to ease administrative burdens, streamline inspection and income verification processes to get people into homes more quickly, and encourage collaboration between the various agencies, systems, and organizations that serve people experiencing homelessness ([S.2234](#); Sens. Rounds (R-SD), Smith (D-MN), Reed (D-RI), and Crapo (R-ID)).
- The **“Housing Supply Frameworks Act”** directs HUD to develop best practices for zoning and land-use policies, helping communities identify and overcome barriers to affordable housing development ([H.R.2840/S.1299](#); Reps. Flood (R-NE) and Pettersen (D-CO) and Sens. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE), Crapo (R-ID), Fetterman (D-PA), and Tillis (R-NC)).
- Two provisions from the **“Choice in Affordable Housing Act”** related to streamlining inspections for the HCV program ([H.R.1981/S.890](#); Reps. Cleaver (D-MO), Lawler (R-NY), Casten (D-IL), Gooden (R-TX), Lynch (D-MA), and Ciscomani (R-AZ), and Sens. Coons (D-CT), Moran (R-KS), Smith (D-MN), Curtis (R-UT), Warnock (D-GA), and Heinrich (D-NM)).

[Housing for the 21st Century Act](#) (H.R.6644) – Reps. Hill (R-AR), Waters (D-CA), Flood (R-NE), and Cleaver (D-MO). The “Housing for the 21st Century Act” includes 27 provisions related to streamlining local, state, and federal processes; reforming federal programs, including the HOME Investment Partnership program, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, and Rural Housing Service (RHS) programs; manufactured housing; veterans’ access to housing; housing counseling; rental housing for elderly and disabled residents; and federal program oversight. Five provisions are based on bills and policies NLIHC supports, including the “Housing Supply Frameworks Act,” reforms to the HOME Investment Partnership Program, the “Rural Housing Service Reform Act,” and the “Choice in Affordable Housing Act.”

[Eviction Crisis Act](#), [Stable Families Act](#) (H.R.8327 in the 117th Congress) – Sens. Bennet (D-CO) and Young (R-IN) and Rep. Torres (D-NY). This bill creates a permanent program to provide emergency rental assistance (ERA) and housing stability services to renters facing temporary financial setbacks that put them at risk of housing instability, eviction, and homelessness. The bill builds on the success of the state and local ERA programs that have helped reduce eviction filings and keep households stably housed. The bill is supported by NLIHC’s Opportunity Starts at Home (OSAH) campaign. After reintroduction, NLIHC will share a fact sheet on the bill with our partners.

[Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act](#) (S.1257, H.R.3776 in the 118th Congress) – Sens. Van Hollen (D-MD) and Young (R-IN) and Reps. Neguse (D-CO) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA). This bipartisan bill provides 250,000 new housing vouchers and mobility counseling services to families with young children, helping them move to safe, affordable housing in communities of their choice, including areas connected to well-performing schools, well-paying jobs, healthcare services, and transit. The bill is supported by the OSAH campaign. To learn more, see the [factsheet](#) on the Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act.

[Fixing Emergency Management for Americans](#) (FEMA) Act (H.R.4669) – Reps. Graves (R-MO) and Larsen (D-WA). The bill restores the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) status as an independent agency outside of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and implements a host of improvements that will help the agency respond faster, fairer, and with increased flexibility to the needs of all disaster survivors across the country.

[Reforming Disaster Recovery Act](#) (H.R.3702; S.1686 in the 118th Congress) – Sens. Schatz (D-HI) and Collins (R-ME), and Rep. Green (D-TX). The bill permanently authorizes the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program and provides important safeguards and tools to ensure disaster recovery efforts reach the lowest-income and most marginalized disaster survivors.

[Fair Housing Improvement Act](#) (S.1267/H.R.2846 in the 118th Congress) – Sen. Kaine (D-VA) and Reps. Peters (D-CA), Schiff (D-CA), Evans (D-PA), Bonamici (D-OR), and Norton (D-DC). The bill protects veterans and low-income families from housing discrimination by expanding the Fair Housing Act to prohibit housing discrimination based on source of income and military or veteran status. To learn more, see NLIHC's [factsheet](#) on the bill. Past versions of the bill were led by former Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT).

[Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act](#) (H.R. 2725/S.1515) – Sens. Cantwell (D-WA), Young (R-IN) and Reps. LaHood (R-IL) and DelBene (D-WA). This bill expands and reforms the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). While an expansion of LIHTC was included in the Republican reconciliation bill, H.R.1, key reforms to the program to better serve households with the greatest needs and those in rural and Tribal communities were not. NLIHC will continue to call on these [needed reforms](#) to be enacted.

[Visitable Inclusive Tax Credits for Accessible Living \(VITAL\) Act](#) (H.R.3963/S.1377) – Reps. Evans (D-PA) and Fitzpatrick (R-PA), and Sens. Casey (D-PA), Duckworth (D-IL), Gillibrand (D-NY), Klobuchar (D-MN), and Welch (D-VT). This bill would increase LIHTC investments and provide needed reforms to ensure developers are building more affordable, accessible housing units for people with disabilities and older adults.

[Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act](#) (S.2285/H.R.6949 in the 118th Congress) – Sen. Schatz (D-HI) and Murkowski (R-AK), and Rep. Waters (D-CA). The bill reauthorizes key tribal housing programs and includes reforms to expand local control of the programming, streamline environmental reviews for tribal housing projects, and incentivize private partnerships.

## CRITICAL, LONG-TERM HOUSING SOLUTIONS

[Ending Homelessness Act](#) (H.R.4872) – Rep. Waters (D-CA). The bill ensures rental assistance is universally available to all eligible households. The bill prohibits source of income discrimination to help increase housing choice and invests \$5 billion over 5 years in the national Housing Trust Fund to address the shortage of affordable housing and to combat homelessness. For more information, see Rep. Waters' [factsheet](#) on the Ending Homelessness Act.

[Housing Crisis Response Act](#) (H.R.6771) – Rep. Waters (D-CA). This bill proposes \$150 billion in critical investments to help renters with the lowest incomes afford the cost of rent. Investments include NLIHC's top priorities: \$25 billion to expand rental assistance, \$65 billion to repair and preserve public housing, and \$15 billion to build rental homes for those with the greatest needs through the national Housing Trust Fund. If enacted, this legislation would amount to the single largest investment in affordable housing in our nation's history, creating nearly 1.4 million affordable and accessible homes, and helping nearly 300,000 households afford their rent. For more information, see Rep. Waters' [factsheet](#) on the bill.



[American Housing and Economic Mobility Act](#) (H.R.2038/S.934) – Rep. Cleaver (D-MO) and Sen. Warren (D-MA). This bill significantly expands investments on the national Housing Trust Fund and other solutions that would help millions of renters struggling to pay rent, and the over 770,000 people in the United States living with no home. The bill invests \$44.5 billion annually for 10 years into the Housing Trust Fund – enough to build and preserve almost two million rental homes affordable to people with the greatest needs. The bill expands fair housing protections; incentivizes communities to reduce zoning and regulatory barriers; provides significant funding to build and rehabilitate affordable homes in Tribal and rural areas; and allocates needed funding to make repairs to the nation’s public housing infrastructure.

[Our Homes, Our Votes Act](#) (H.R.10215 in the 118th Congress) – Rep. Garcia (D-IL). This bill would facilitate voter registration for residents of public and federally subsidized housing by adding public housing agencies (PHAs) and HUD-assisted housing providers to the “National Voter Registration Act,” commonly known as the “Motor Voter Law.”



## TALKING POINTS

### BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN INCOME AND HOUSING COSTS.

- A major cause of the affordable housing crisis is the growing gap between income and the cost of rent. Renters today need to earn over \$28 per hour to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment, and over \$33 per hour to afford a modest two-bedroom rental home at fair market rent without spending over 30% of their income on housing. The average renter earns just over \$23 per hour; the prevailing federal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour.
- 18 of the 25 most common occupations in the U.S. pay less than the \$33 per hour needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home. This accounts for 74 million people – nearly half of the U.S. workforce.
- Because of decades of underinvestment, only [one in four households](#) eligible for rental assistance receives it, leaving the other 75% of eligible households struggling to afford the cost of rent.
- A growing body of research finds that rental assistance can improve longer-term health and educational outcomes, increase children’s chances of long-term success, and increase racial equity.
- People of color, as well as people with disabilities, are most harmed by the housing crisis. Black households account for 13% of all households, but 26% of the lowest-income households and [37% of people experiencing homelessness](#). Households with members who have a disability requiring long-term care are [nearly twice as likely](#) to be severely housing cost burdened than households in which no one has a disability requiring long-term care.
- Find more talking points and resources [here](#).

### EXPAND AND PRESERVE THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE RENTAL HOMES FOR PEOPLE WITH THE LOWEST INCOMES.

- A root cause of the nation’s affordable housing crisis is the lack of safe, decent, affordable, accessible homes for people with the lowest incomes. Nationally, there are fewer than four affordable, available rental homes for every 10 households with the lowest incomes.
- Local zoning and land use reforms have an important role to play in increasing the supply of affordable housing for middle- and even low-income renters, but zoning and land use reforms alone are not enough to meet the housing needs of people with the lowest incomes.
- The private market cannot – on its own – build, operate, and maintain rental housing that is affordable to people who are paid the lowest wages. Instead, federal investments are required to increase and maintain the supply of quality, affordable homes, targeted to those with the most urgent housing needs.
- Less than 5% of U.S. housing supply is accessible to older and/or disabled people; even less accessible housing stock is also affordable to people with low incomes. As a result, people with disabilities are over-represented among people experiencing homelessness or housing instability, and older adults are one of the fastest growing populations of people experiencing homelessness.
- In every year since 2016, available data show at least 500,000 people waitlisted for Home and Community Based Services to live independently.
- Increasing the supply of deeply affordable, accessible homes for the lowest-income renters helps alleviate growing rent pressure on people with higher incomes. Without additional affordable stock, millions of the lowest-income renters occupy units they cannot afford. A greater supply of affordable, accessible rental housing for those with the lowest incomes would allow these renters to move into affordable units, freeing up their original units for those who can better afford them.
- Find more talking points and resources [here](#).

## PROVIDE EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE TO HOUSEHOLDS IN CRISIS.

- Emergency rental assistance (ERA) programs have played a critical role in preventing eviction in communities across the country
- Between 2020 and 2021, ERA programs helped cut the number of eviction filings in half by providing well-targeted to help those most at-risk of eviction – [64% of recipients](#) of ERA identified as extremely low-income.
- Learn more about the continued need for ERA [here](#).

## STRENGTHEN AND ENFORCE RENTER PROTECTIONS.

- The power imbalance between renters and landlords puts renters at greater risk of housing instability, harassment, evictions, and homelessness, while also fueling racial inequity.
- Staffing cuts at HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO) and funding freezes on grants to communities for Fair Housing enforcement have severely impacted HUD's ability to investigate Fair Housing complaints and hold bad actors accountable. An adequately staffed and funded FHEO is a minimum requirement to enforce renter protections.
- Discrimination by landlords against renters prevents households from utilizing federal, state, or local rental assistance, and is often a pretext for illegal discrimination against renters of color, women, and people with disabilities.
- Fewer than 3% of renters have access to legal counsel when facing eviction, compared to 81% of landlords. In communities with right to counsel laws, 86% of renters facing evictions remained in their homes, and eviction filings decreased by 10%.
- Find more talking points and resources [here](#).

## DEFEND PROVEN SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS.

- The most successful strategy to address homelessness is to provide access to safe, stable housing and voluntary supportive services, treatment, and healthcare.
- This model has been shown to quickly end homelessness, increase housing and economic stability, improve quality of life, and help communities resolve homeless encampments. It is a strategy that is flexible and can be tailored to meet the unique short- and long-term needs of people experiencing homelessness.
- Arresting or ticketing people experiencing homelessness is counterproductive, expensive, dehumanizing, and ineffective. These policies do nothing to alleviate homelessness because they do nothing to address the root causes of homelessness: the severe shortage of affordable, accessible housing available to people with the lowest incomes, and the growing gap between income and housing costs.
- Learn more about defending proven solutions to homelessness [here](#).

## MEETING TIPS

**Advocates joining NLIHC's Capitol Hill Day will be assigned to a group from their state when possible.** Each state group is typically headed by a State Captain, a representative from one of NLIHC's [State and Tribal Partners](#) who will be responsible for scheduling meetings with member offices (where applicable).

Advocates who do not have a State Captain or who wish to schedule their own meetings can use the tips below for scheduling a meeting with your elected officials.

### SCHEDULING A MEETING

- Locate your representative's and senators' district office phone numbers. NLIHC staff can help – email [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).
- Reach out to each office about two weeks in advance using NLIHC's request template that follows. Introduce yourself as a constituent and ask to speak with the scheduler. Identify what organization you are affiliated with, if applicable, and explain that you and other constituents would like to meet with the member when you are in DC on March 13. Contact [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org) for help getting scheduler contact information.
- Once the meeting is scheduled, confirm the building and room number, or if you are meeting virtually, what virtual platform will be used (i.e. a conference call, Zoom, Google Meet, etc.), the link or phone number, and any passcodes needed. Share this information with others attending your meeting.

### PREPARING FOR A MEETING

- Use the meeting to highlight how federal housing resources are used in your community and the ongoing challenges constituents face due to under investments in these resources.
- Outline an agenda that includes the amount of time to spend on each section. Review the NLIHC talking points, data resources, and storytelling tips in this toolkit.
- Do research on the person you are meeting with beforehand to help connect your issues to their interests. Share talking points in advance with the group of stakeholders joining your meeting, assign who will cover which topics, and host a prep call to practice.
- Gather any materials you want to share with the office in addition to the factsheets and state-level data NLIHC will have available for you at the Housing Policy Forum.

### MEETING TIME!

- Dress professionally or wear your Capitol Hill Day T-shirt if you have one (limited availability). If meeting virtually, avoid background clutter and/or noise.
- Be punctual. Allow time to get through security and find the meeting room. Arrive 10 minutes before the start time.
- Open your meeting with introductions, including your connection to the state or district the office represents.
- Provide the elected official or staff with the NLIHC materials and refer to those materials during your meeting.

- Follow your agenda. If the staff member or your elected official does not have much knowledge of affordable housing challenges in your community, use this as an opportunity to educate them. Connect your work to the elected official's interests as much as possible.
- If you don't know the answer to a question, simply say, "I don't know. I will follow up with an answer."
- Always make a specific ask in your meeting using a question with a yes or no answer, such as, "Will you support increased investments in affordable homes for the lowest income renters in the federal budget?" If they say maybe, you can use that as an opportunity to follow up later.
- Ask if you or your group can take a picture with them to share on social media later!
- Thank the elected official or legislative staff for their time and consideration.

## AFTER THE MEETING

- Share a photo and post on social media. Tag (@) NLIHC and the member's office to thank them for the meeting. Include the hashtag #NLIHCHillDay26.
- Send a thank-you email and include any materials requested. Confirm any next steps or commitments discussed.
- Continue the conversation by checking in periodically, sharing updates, and continuing to build the relationship over time.
- Tell NLIHC how your meeting went using our [log your interaction](#) tool.



# MEETING REQUEST TEMPLATE

Below is an email template for requesting meetings with your members of Congress. Please personalize highlighted portions and remove any irrelevant information before sending. Some House or Senate offices have online forms, but you typically can send an email to the office's scheduler. To find who the schedulers are, email [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).

**Email subject line:** Meeting Request

Dear [scheduler name]:

My name is [your name] and I am a [constituent of Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_ OR staff member at \_\_\_\_\_, and organization working in \_\_\_\_\_ (city/state)]. I'm reaching out to request a meeting with [Representative/Senator Last Name] to discuss solutions to housing instability and homelessness affecting our community.

**[If applicable: Briefly introduce your organization in 1-2 sentences about your mission and the communities you serve.]**

I will be in Washington, DC, on Friday, March 13, and request the opportunity to meet at the Representative's/Senator's convenience. There will be [number] of people joining the meeting. We know the member cares deeply about our community and would like to meet with them to share more about our local experiences and how federal policy solutions can make a lasting impact.

If the member is unavailable, we would be glad to meet with a member of their staff. Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

**[Insert your name]**

**[Insert your organization, if applicable]**

**[Your Email and Phone Number]**

# STORYTELLING TIPS AND TRICKS

Stories have the power to move people into action. When shared through shared values and vision, personal stories can make the case for housing solutions more effectively than facts alone. They help lawmakers see how their decisions impact real people.

This guide was developed with the help of partners at RESULTS and Housing Narrative Lab. It offers support for anyone interested in telling their story – or supporting others in doing so – as part of their advocacy.

## CORE PRINCIPLES

- **Agency:** Directly impacted people should have full control over if, how, and when they share their stories – and with whom. Always seek permission to share someone’s story.
- **Respect:** Ensure stories are told in holistic ways that focus on strengths and honors their full humanity, not focusing solely on their trauma or housing status.
- **Compensation:** When funds allow, individuals asked to share their personal story in a professional or public setting should be offered fair compensation for their time and expertise.

## ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE STORY

- **Lived Experience:** Share a personal experience connected to the affordable housing or homelessness issue at hand – your own journey, the impact of stable housing, or your work in the field.
- **Values:** Help listeners connect to your story by naming the values that guide you (e.g., safety, dignity, opportunity, family, community).
- **Call to Action:** End with what you want the lawmaker to do based on what you shared.
- **Tips and Reminders:**
  - Keep it focused and simple – 3-5 minutes is ideal.
  - Be grounded in truth and your own experience.
  - Explain the impact of policies on you and your community.
  - Don’t speak on behalf of a culture or community that is not your own.
  - If you are sharing someone else’s story, get permission and respect their voice.

## PROMPTS FOR PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCES

- What does “home” mean to you?
- Describe your home and your living conditions. How did that affect your life?
- Has housing instability or have other housing challenges impacted you, your family, job, education, or health?
- Have you received housing assistance? What changed for you after that?
- What makes you proud to live in the place you call home?
- How would more affordable homes or better protections help your community?
- What are your hopes for the future and how does your home fit into that vision?

## PROMPTS FOR HOUSING OR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- What are the biggest housing challenges your clients or community face?
- How do you see federal affordable housing programs making a difference?
- What stories do you hear that highlight the need for stronger investments?
- What is one moment that made you proud of your work?
- How would more housing assistance improve your ability to serve the community?

## AFTER THE STORY

- Be sure the storyteller feels supported before and after sharing. Ask how they're doing and thank them sincerely.
- Let them know how their story will be used and follow up with outcomes when possible.
- Invite them to future opportunities to participate in your advocacy work if they're interested but never pressure them to share again.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Housing Needs by State:

*(Select your state and navigate to “resources tab” to find the following)*

- State Housing Profiles include key data for each state, such as the shortage of affordable homes, housing cost burdens by income group, and the demographic makeup of extremely low-income renter households. This is a compelling factsheet to present to members of Congress and their staff.
- Congressional District Profiles include several dimensions of housing affordability for renter households in by Congressional district, the surrounding area, and the state. These are especially helpful in meetings with representatives who might not believe statewide data applies to their district.

**State Housing Preservation Profiles:** Preservation Profiles use data from the National Housing Preservation Database to provide an overview of the affordable housing inventory at the state level. Each profile features a graph depicting the number of affordable homes with subsidies set to expire in the near future. Use this data sheet to advocate for expanding investments to preserve these homes before many developments convert to market rents.

**The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes:** The Gap data demonstrates the gap between the number of renter households and the number of rental homes that affordable and available to them. It also breaks down the number of households who are cost burdened by income group. Much of this data is available on the State Housing Profiles.

**Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing:** Out of Reach shows that affordable rental homes are out of reach for millions of low-wage workers and their families. The report calculates the “Housing Wage” nationally and by state, metropolitan areas, and counties, demonstrating the estimated hourly wages full-time workers must earn to afford rental homes at fair market rent. State Reports with this data are available every state and their respective metropolitan areas and counties.

**For more information, email [outreach@nlihc.org](mailto:outreach@nlihc.org).**

