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This morning, the president releases his FY21 budget proposal, again proposing deep cuts to housing, homeless and community development programs. This afternoon, NLIHC will send an overview, analysis and call to action to defeat these harmful proposals. Stay tuned!

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Take Action

Urge Congress to Provide Robust Funding for Affordable Housing Programs

President Trump released his budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2021 today. NLIHC will analyze the president's request and share a summary later today. In the meantime, NLIHC and other national leaders in housing, homelessness, community development, and transportation are circulating a [sign-on letter](#) urging Congress to again reject any harmful proposals and ensure transportation and housing programs receive the highest amount of funding possible for FY21.

The president's previous budget requests have proposed extreme funding cuts and the elimination of affordable housing programs, as well as rent increases and work requirements on low-income families. Thanks to the efforts of advocates and congressional champions, Congress has rejected the Trump administration's proposals each of the past three years.

While the two-year bipartisan budget agreement signed last summer (see *Memo 7/29/19*) provided some relief from the low spending caps on defense and domestic programs, Congress will have only about \$5 billion more in FY21 than this year for non-defense programs, including affordable housing and community development programs. In order to cover rising costs, HUD's budget will need a significant increase over FY20 levels just to maintain assistance to the current number of households.

Last year, more than 3,500 national, state, and local housing and community development, faith-based, disability, and civil rights organizations, as well as officials in municipal, tribal, and state governments, joined NLIHC in sending a letter to Congress expressing their support for these programs.

Let's do it again! [Sign the letter](#) urging Congress to ensure transportation and housing programs receive the highest amount of funding possible for FY21. Because the FY21 letter is substantially similar to the [previous letter](#), organizations who would like to **opt-out** of the letter should email outreach@nlihc.org.

Organizations that would like to join the letter for FY21 can read and sign it at: <https://sforce.co/2UaH1X4>

Please share this letter and urge organizations in your network to sign on!

Sign National Letter Urging Housing Investments in Infrastructure Package

House Democrats have unveiled a \$760 billion blueprint for an infrastructure package that does not include robust resources to build or preserve affordable and accessible homes for America's lowest-income seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, families with children, and other individuals.

Congressional leaders need to hear from you! Please sign onto a national letter urging Congress to include in any infrastructure bill at least \$5 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) and \$70 billion to repair public housing.

Sign the letter at: <https://sforce.co/2S4u3rm>

Background

The connection between affordable housing and infrastructure is clear: like roads and bridges, affordable housing is a long-term asset that helps communities and families thrive. An infrastructure bill presents a critical opportunity to build and preserve homes affordable to our nation's lowest-income households.

The HTF is the first new federal housing resource in a generation exclusively targeted to building and preserving housing affordable to people with the lowest incomes. Most states have chosen to use their HTF investments to build, rehabilitate, or preserve affordable rental housing for extremely low-income veterans, seniors, people with disabilities or special needs, and people experiencing homelessness.

Public housing is home to nearly 1 million households and plays a critical role in providing safe, decent housing to families with the greatest needs. Due to decades of declining capital funds, however, public housing now faces a backlog of capital repair needs of as much as \$70 billion, threatening the quality and even the existence of these homes. Without sufficient resources, 10,000 to 15,000 public housing apartments are lost each year to obsolescence or decay.

Take Action

Please join organizations across the nation in urging congressional leaders to include in any infrastructure package at least \$5 billion for the HTF and \$70 billion for public housing capital funds.

[Sign the letter today!](#)

Urge the Trump Administration to Support Evidence-Based Approaches to Ending Homelessness

Homelessness is one of our country's most urgent, tragic and solvable crises. We cannot end homelessness, however, by ignoring the evidence about what works. For this reason, NLIHC, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, and other national leaders are urging organizations to sign onto a letter expressing concerns about the Trump administration's rejection of evidence-based approaches to ending homelessness.

Sign the letter at: <https://sforce.co/2UfhZy>

Background

It is critical that any federal effort to address homelessness is rooted in evidence and data. Dr. Robert Marbut, President Donald Trump's pick to lead the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), rejects evidence-based approaches to ending homelessness, including "Housing First" and initiatives to stop the criminalization of homelessness.

Housing First and anti-criminalization efforts are supported by [decades of learning and research](#), which has led to broad, bipartisan agreement that the solution to homelessness starts with an affordable home coupled with supportive services to help individuals address other challenges, not with a ticket or jail.

To end homelessness once and for all, our nation must significantly expand investments to make homes affordable for people with the lowest incomes, and Housing First and efforts to stop the criminalization of homelessness must remain the foundation for any federal approach to addressing homelessness.

Take Action

Please sign onto [this national letter](#) to ensure that any federal action on homelessness is based proven solutions and then tweet about it using the hashtag #HomesEndHomelessness.

[Read and sign the letter today!](#)

Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020

Candidates Address Fair and Affordable Housing in Debate

Affordable housing and racial inequities in housing were featured prominently in the nationally televised presidential debate in New Hampshire on February 7, just days before the state's primary. Here's a sample of what they said:



Senator Elizabeth Warren: “We need to start having race-conscious laws. I have a great housing plan to build more housing - but understand that it was the policy of the United States of America to discriminate against African American and any other people of color from buying homes until 1965. You can't just repeal that and say ok, now everything is even. It's not. . . . Be a good federal partner. Put 'real' money into education. Put 'real' money into housing . . . into health care, into the future of our children. That's how we build the America of our best values.”

Vice President Joe Biden: “If you own a house in an all-black neighborhood, same exact house in an all-white neighborhood...the house in the all-black neighborhood would be valued less making it more difficult for you to accumulate wealth...we have to do much, much more. That's what got me into politics in the first place—redlining—to stop it.”

Senator Amy Klobuchar: “30% of African-American kids living in poverty. We know there are economic solutions here, to invest in those communities - housing, childcare. . . . If you have trouble stretching your paycheck to pay for that rent, I know you. And I will fight for you.”

Senator Bernie Sanders: “We have a racist society from top to bottom, impacting health care, housing, criminal justice, education, you name it.”

[Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020](#), NLIHC's nonpartisan voter and candidate engagement project, tracks what all candidates are saying on affordable housing and homelessness. More information about all 2020 presidential candidates' housing plans—as well as videos and news articles—can be found at the [Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020 candidate profiles](#).

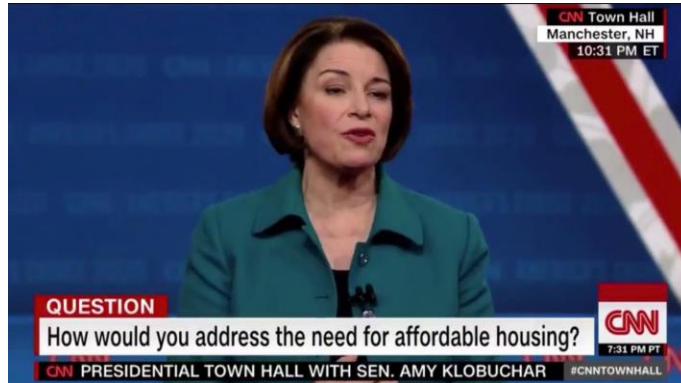
Affordable Housing Is Key Election Issue in the Primaries

NLIHC's nonpartisan voter and candidate engagement project [Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020](#) and our more than 1,000 partners around the country have worked to raise the profile of affordable housing and homelessness in the presidential elections. The effort has paid off! All but one of the candidates (former Vice President Joe Biden) have released robust affordable housing proposals, and media outlets are spotlighting housing as an election issue as never before. Just a few recent examples from the media:

- “We asked presidential candidates: What would you do about California's housing crisis?” ([The Desert Sun](#))
- “How would Democratic debate candidates fix the housing and homelessness crises?” ([LA Times](#))
- “What Do Housing Groups Think About Dems' Affordable Housing Plans?” ([Shelterforce](#))
- “Where They Stand: Comparing The 2020 Democrats' Affordable Housing Plans” ([New Hampshire Public Radio](#))

Voting in 2020 presidential primaries is underway, and housing is a top electoral issue. Fox News and CNN separately hosted a series of nationally televised town halls with eight candidates in advance of New Hampshire's primary on Tuesday, February 11. Tom Steyer, Pete Buttigieg and Senators Amy Klobuchar,

Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren all talked about affordable housing during last week’s town halls. Here’s a sampling of what they said:



- Senator Klobuchar: “Yes, urban areas are having a big problem with affordable housing because of the rents and the costs, but there are also a lot of mid-size towns and small towns in rural areas with huge housing problems.” She described her plan to: increase rental assistance, expand deeply affordable supply, and help people afford housing. (To see the video clip, go to <https://bit.ly/38aX0ZI> and scroll down to “Videos.”)



- Senator Warren: “We have a terrible housing problem in this country. We have a shrinking housing supply and a growing population, among middle-class families, working-class families, the working poor, the poor poor, the homeless, formally incarcerated people, seniors who want to age in place, and also people with disabilities.” (To see the video clip, go to <https://bit.ly/2SvmUAW> and scroll down to “Videos.”)



- Senator Sanders: “In the richest country in the history of the world – it is not all that hard to say that all of our people can have a decent standard of living. Yes, if you work 40 hours a week, you can make at

least 15 bucks an hour. Yes, your kids, regardless of your income, can go to college. Yes, of course, health care is a human right. Yes, of course, you don't have to spend half of your income for housing because we're going to build affordable housing. This is not utopian stuff. This is stuff we can do.” (Video clip not yet available.)



- Mr. Steyer: “We have too few affordable housing units in the United States of America. It's not hard to figure out why prices go up. This is like – there’s too little supply and too much demand. We need more affordable housing units, to the tune of millions.” (Video clip not yet available.)



- Senator Buttigieg: “I am proposing that we invest \$430 billion dollars in making sure more affordable housing are being built and making sure families can better access things like tax credits and vouchers to support their ability to have a home. We have to tackle this. We have the resources to do it if we have the will and shame on us if we allow homelessness to be a problem that accelerates in our time.” (To see the video clip, go to <http://bit.ly/39si6TF> and scroll down to “Videos”)

More information about all 2020 presidential candidates’ housing plans—as well as videos and news articles—can be found at the *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* [candidate profiles](#).

How Can Housing Providers Register and Mobilize their Residents to Vote: Learn How on February 20 Podcast!

Join NLIHC for a podcast on “**The Role of Housing Providers in Registering and Mobilizing Voters**” on February 20 at 3:00 p.m. ET. Register for this podcast and NLIHC’s entire 15-month “[Third Thursdays at Three](#)” webinar and podcast series on nonpartisan voter and candidate engagement, free to the public, at: <https://tinyurl.com/y3t9gfr2>

How can housing providers - like public housing agencies and operators of Low Income Housing Tax Credit housing – register to vote and mobilize their residents to exercise their civic duty? Learn how at this February 20 podcast. Presenters will also explore ideas on how PHAs can conduct voter registration with Housing Choice Voucher households who are often harder to connect with during registration drives because the households are scattered.

NLIHC provides [an array of nonpartisan resources, tools, and training](#) on increasing voter registration and turnout among low-income renters and on engaging candidates leading up to the 2020 elections, including these webinars and podcasts covering many facets of voter and candidate engagement, featuring experts and advocates with frontline experience.

The presentations take place at 3:00 p.m. ET on the third Thursday of each month. All sessions will be recorded and posted to the *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* website for those who cannot attend the live broadcasts. The full list of webinar topics:

- Session 1: Legal Considerations for Election Engagement for 501 (c3) organizations, September 19. (Watch recording at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>)
- Session 2: Developing an Effective Plan for Voter Engagement Work, October 17. (Watch recording at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>)
- Session 3: Helpful Tools and Partners for Election Engagement, November 21 (Watch recording at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>)
- Session 4: Voter Registration Part 1 – Messaging, Events, and Canvassing, December 19 (Watch recording at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>)
- Session 5: Voter Registration Part 2 – Finding and Registering Residents of Subsidized Housing, January 16 (Watch recording at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>)
- **Session 6: The Role of Housing Providers in Registering and Mobilizing Voters, February 20**
- Session 7: Getting Candidates on the Record, March 19
- Session 8: Educating Voters, April 16
- Session 9: Housing Issues and Ballot Initiatives, May 21
- Session 10: Overcoming Common Obstacles to Voting, June 18
- Session 11: The Challenge of Voting While Homeless, July 16
- Session 12: Voter Mobilization Part 1 – Early Voting and Vote-by-Mail, August 20
- Session 13: Voter Mobilization Part 2 – Protecting Low Income People from Voter Intimidation and Voter Caging Tactics, September 17
- Session 14: Election Day! Getting Out the Vote, October 15
- Session 15: After the Vote – Holding Candidates to their Promises, November 19

Register once for all webinars/podcasts and receive reminders at: <https://tinyurl.com/y3t9gfr2>

Watch recordings of previous webinars at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>

Congress

House Committee Examines Trump Administration’s AFFH Proposal

The House Committee on Oversight and Reform’s Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Subcommittee held a [hearing](#) on February 5, “A Threat to American’s Children: The Trump Administration’s Proposal to Gut Fair Housing Accountability.” The hearing focused on HUD’s proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing

(AFFH) rule as a part of a series of hearings examining how the Trump administration’s policies and proposals would negatively impact children. Most of the witnesses and Democratic members of the subcommittee stressed the importance of the previous administration’s 2015 AFFH rule and criticized the new proposed rule. Republican members, however, expressed support for the proposal, focusing their questions and remarks on housing supply instead of fair housing choice. NLIHC submitted a [statement for the record](#) expressing support for the 2015 rule and identifying the problems with HUD’s proposed rule.

In his opening remarks, Subcommittee Chair Jamie Raskin (D-MD) characterized HUD’s proposed AFFH rule as a “radical U-turn” from fulfilling the Fair Housing Act’s goal of housing desegregation, one that would further limit fair and affordable housing opportunities. “HUD is proposing to rubber-stamp housing plans without serious account and without any eye toward making fair housing a serious national priority,” Chair Raskin stated. Full Committee Chair Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) shared similar sentiments, stating that the proposed rule would protect special interests and increase discrimination and segregation. Other Democratic members of the committee also emphasized the need to address the racial inequities in housing while engaging impacted communities in the process.

Ranking Member Fred Keller’s (R-PA) remarks ignored fair housing. Instead, he expressed support for eliminating regulations in order to empower local communities to increase housing affordability. He called the 2015 AFFH rule “a burdensome paperwork exercise with no enforcement that would have done nothing to produce actual affordable housing.” Like the Trump administration’s proposed rule, Ranking Member Keller and other Republicans on the committee incorrectly equated affordable housing to fair housing choice. Witness Michael Hendrix, director of state and local policy at the Manhattan Institute, similarly praised the proposed rule, failing to recognize the role of federal, state, and local governments in creating racial segregation in America.

The four other witnesses highlighted the successes of the 2015 rule and emphasized the need to increase housing choice by addressing current, ongoing discrimination and disinvestment. Jorge Andres Soto, director of public policy at the National Fair Housing Alliance, discussed America’s long history of discriminatory housing policies and stated that the proposed rule was an “endorsement of segregation” that would “not satisfy the requirements of the [Fair Housing] Act.” Ellen Lee, director of community and economic development for the City of New Orleans, shared how the process created under the 2015 rule helped the city better understand various communities’ housing needs. She noted that it is “equally important *that* we invest in affordable housing as *where* we invest in affordable housing.”

Dr. Megan Sandel, principal investigator at Children’s Healthwatch/Boston Medical Center, discussed the link between positive health outcomes and access to stable, affordable homes in areas of opportunity. She noted that housing discrimination often prevents families with children from living in neighborhoods connected to opportunity, which research has clearly linked to improved health and educational outcomes. Ateira Griffin, CEO and founder of Building Our Nation’s Daughters, shared how discriminatory housing policies shaped her childhood and the lives of the children she works with in Baltimore.

NLIHC’s statement for the record is at: <https://tinyurl.com/t34hg36>

More about the hearing is at: <https://tinyurl.com/wn46osp>

More about HUD’s proposed AFFH rule is at [Fight for Housing Justice](#) and on NLIHC’s website at: <https://bit.ly/2Snb2Ax>

Information about the 2015 AFFH rule, Secretary Carson’s suspension of the 2015 rule, and the AI process that jurisdictions must follow until a final rule is published is on pages [7-14](#), [7-21](#), and [7-26](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

Subcommittee Holds Hearing on “A Future Without Public Housing”

The House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing, Community Development, and Insurance held a [hearing](#) on February 5 on “A Future Without Public Housing? Examining the Trump Administration’s Efforts to Eliminate Public Housing.” Members of the subcommittee and witnesses discussed various proposals and policies to address the significant public housing capital needs backlog, including the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), expanding resources for the program through an infrastructure package, and pursuing additional public-private partnerships.

In their opening remarks, Committee Chair Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Subcommittee Chair William Lacy Clay (D-MO) expressed concerns about the Trump administration’s efforts to “reposition” public housing and move away from administering public housing. Chair Clay quoted NLIHC’s [The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes](#) report when discussing the shortage of affordable, accessible homes, particularly for the lowest-income people with disabilities, seniors, and families with children. Both Chair Waters and Chair Clay stated that affordable housing should be part of an infrastructure package, highlighting the “Housing Infrastructure Act of 2019” ([H.R. 5187](#)), which would include \$70 billion for public housing. While Ranking Member Steven Stivers (R-OH) acknowledged the need for affordable housing for the lowest-income people, he praised the administration’s efforts to move away from public housing and encouraged investments through public-private partnerships.

All witnesses opposed the eradication of the public housing program and encouraged increased investments. Kate Walz, vice president of advocacy at the Shriver Center on Poverty Law, focused on how ignoring the capital needs of public housing and demolishing units have impacted residents. She shared stories of residents living in homes with mold and pest infestations and stressed that simply demolishing public housing would only exacerbate the nation’s affordable housing shortage. Ms. Walz highlighted legislation, such as the draft proposal “[The Public Housing Tenant Protection Act of 2020](#),” that would ensure one-for-one replacement of affordable homes demolished or sold and provide other important protections for public housing residents. Dr. Susan Popkin, fellow at the Urban Institute, noted that the majority of the public housing stock is at least 40 years old and needs major capital repairs. She stressed that without sufficient funding, these homes will continue to deteriorate. Dr. Popkin stated that given the extent of the housing crisis and its impact on the lowest-income families, Congress and HUD need to ensure this source of affordable, accessible homes is not lost.

Ann Gass from the Housing Authority of the City of Austin and Bobby Collins from the Housing Authority of the City of Shreveport mentioned RAD as a way for housing authorities to preserve affordable homes. Both acknowledged, however, that the program has flaws, such as financing constraints, but they said RAD is the best option available until Congress provides additional funding for public housing capital repairs. Mr. Collins stated that “the most effective means of addressing the backlog of unmet needs for public housing programs is to provide adequate funding to stabilize and preserve existing public housing properties.” While agreeing with other witnesses about the need for funding, Eugene Jones, president and CEO of the Atlanta Housing Authority, also stated that public housing agencies (PHAs) need additional administrative flexibilities and promoted the Moving to Work demonstration program.

Chair Waters expressed her concerns about RAD and the lack of replacement homes for public housing units demolished or otherwise lost. In response to a question from Ranking Member Stivers about how to improve RAD, witnesses mentioned the need for additional funding, stronger resident protections, and alternative tools. Members and witnesses further explored these ideas throughout the hearing, discussing issues of tenant displacement, unsafe living conditions, the general lack of affordable housing, demolition of public housing, and the role of private developers.

More about the hearing and a livestream is at: <https://tinyurl.com/r6fv25o>

More about the “Housing Infrastructure Act of 2019” is at: <https://tinyurl.com/we3d9ng>

The draft proposal “The Public Housing Tenant Protection Act of 2020” is at: <https://tinyurl.com/yx4zu3vn>

More about public housing is on [page 4-25](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*

More about RAD is on [page 4-33](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*

More about the key provisions of public housing “repositioning” such as demolition, disposition, and voluntary conversion of public housing to vouchers is on NLIHC’s public housing webpage, <https://tinyurl.com/wu4mo9l>

Administration

NLIHC and NAEH Release New Materials Responding to Administration’s False Statements on Homelessness

NLIHC and the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) released new materials to respond to several misleading statements made by Robert Marbut, President Donald Trump’s pick to lead the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Dr. Marbut has ignored decades of learning, research, and bipartisan agreement by rejecting “Housing First,” a proven model for addressing homelessness that prioritizes access to permanent, stable housing with supportive services, if needed. Housing First recognizes that stable housing is a prerequisite for effective psychiatric and substance-abuse treatment and for improving quality of life. Once stably housed, individuals are better able to take advantage of wrap-around services to help support housing stability, employment, and recovery. Without stable housing, attaining these personal goals becomes much more difficult.

Dr. Marbut ignores the structural issues that lead to homelessness, choosing instead to blame it on homeless people and homeless programs. Dr. Marbut advocates for punitive, mandatory behavioral requirements that are at odds with well-established best practices. He says he does not support the criminalization of homelessness, but his approach uses the threat of jail – by outlawing life-sustaining activities such as “street feeding” programs run by churches, sleeping in public, and panhandling – to force people into large shelters without a path back to housing. Dr. Marbut claims his methods are successful, but he provides little - and misleading - evidence to back up his statements.

In response, NLIHC and NAEH released two factsheets on the [research and evidence](#) on the successes of Housing First and on [Dr. Marbut’s misleading statements](#). Additionally, NLIHC released a fact sheet on the [causes and solutions to homelessness](#). Please share widely using the hashtag #HomesEndHomelessness

Fight for Housing Justice

Join NLIHC and Partners for Webinar on HUD’s Harmful Proposed Fair Housing Rule, February 13

NLIHC and other members of the [Fight For Housing Justice](#) campaign will host a webinar on February 13 at 2:00 pm ET about HUD’s proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule (see *Memo*, [1/13](#)). This proposal is the Trump administration’s latest attack on civil rights and fair housing. Speakers will review

HUD’s previous 2015 AFFH rule, summarize the administration’s proposed rule, and discuss how to take action and oppose this harmful proposal.

HUD’s proposed AFFH rule would gut the landmark 2015 AFFH rule that provided guidance and tools to state and local governments and public housing agencies to help them better identify and address harmful patterns – often created by government policy – of segregation, discrimination, and disinvestment. The 2015 rule was developed over several years with input from a wide variety of stakeholders.

NLIHC, the National Housing Law Project (NHLP), and the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) will host the webinar to help advocates learn more about HUD’s new proposal and how it could impact communities. Speakers include Debby Goldberg of NFHA, Renee Williams of NHLP, and Sonya Acosta of NLIHC.

Advocates can also find additional resources – including a [two-page](#), an [eight-page](#), and a [30-page](#) summary and analysis – about AFFH and the proposed rule on the [NLIHC website](#) and www.FightForHousingJustice.org. Share materials on social media using the hashtag #KeepHousingFair

Register for the webinar at: <https://tinyurl.com/to33x8b>

NLIHC’s resources on AFFH are at: <https://tinyurl.com/yx2wjr2r>

Learn more about AFFH under the Trump/Carson administration at: <https://bit.ly/2S4Rxhu>

NLIHC’s two-page summary and analysis is at: <https://tinyurl.com/qlxb5zt>

NLIHC’s eight-page summary and analysis is at: <https://tinyurl.com/rqyt5ou>

NLIHC’s 30-page detailed summary and analysis is at: <https://tinyurl.com/tfkmn8p>

Information about the 2015 AFFH rule, HUD Secretary Ben Carson’s suspension of the 2015 rule, as well as the AI process that jurisdictions must follow until a final rule is published is on pages [7-14](#), [7-21](#), and [7-26](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

NLIHC Housing Policy Forum 2020

“Expanding Affordable Housing Opportunities in Native and Rural Communities” at NLIHC Housing Policy Forum 2020

“Expanding Affordable Housing Opportunities in Native and Rural Communities” will be a featured session at NLIHC’s Housing Policy Forum 2020: *Ending Homelessness and Housing Poverty*, taking place in Washington, DC, March 25-27. Register today for the 2020 Policy Forum at: <https://bit.ly/2ofWibO>

Native and rural communities present unique challenges related to safe, accessible, and affordable housing. Join advocates and staff from key congressional offices for a discussion on how to increase federal resources for preserving and increasing the affordable housing stock in rural areas and on tribal lands. Confirmed and invited speakers include:



Andres Saavedra,
Senior Program Officer, Rural LISC



Matthew Traylor, Legislative Assistant,
Office of Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)



Pinky Clifford, Executive Director,
Oglala Sioux Tribe Partnership for Housing,
and NLIHC Board Member



Anne Mavity, Executive Director,
Minnesota Housing Partnership

Other session topics at the Forum include racial equity with Ibram X. Kendi, National Book Award-winning author of *How to Be an Antiracist* and *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America!*; the Ken Burns Film, “East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story” and a discussion with the film’s

directors, a resident featured in the film, and policy experts; the current state of affordable housing in America – the opportunities and threats; a Capitol Hill Insiders Panel; promoting healthy homes; mobilizing against attacks to housing opportunities; creating and sustaining multi-sector housing coalitions; the administration’s actions on homelessness; redesigning the disaster recovery system; the YIMBY movement; research and messaging on ending homelessness; NLIHC’s *Our Homes, Our Votes* nonpartisan voter and candidate engagement project; resident-led movements; state and local affordable housing solutions; rural and native housing; state and local organizing best practices; advancing ambitious housing bills; and more.

When: The Forum will begin for most participants (see note about special Resident sessions below) on **Wednesday, March 25 at 1:00 pm**, with a full day of sessions on Thursday, March 26. Capitol Hill Day will take place on Friday, March 27.

Additional Sessions for Low-Income Residents: The 2020 Housing Policy Forum will offer additional resident sessions **starting on Tuesday, March 24, at 2:00 p.m.**, including a dinner with NLIHC state partners that evening. The special resident sessions will continue on Wednesday, March 25 at 8:30 a.m. prior to the full Forum start at 1:00 p.m.

Housing Leadership Awards 2020: The 2020 NLIHC Housing Leadership Awards Reception honoring Shauna Sorrells (posthumous), Bill Faith, and Jennifer Ho will take place on Thursday, March 26 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., also at the Washington Court Hotel. A separate registration fee is required to attend the Leadership Awards event. Register here. (See related article in this *Memo to Members and Partners*.)

Hotel Reservations: NLIHC has a room block at discounted rates at the Washington Court Hotel where the Forum will take place. Reserve a room at <https://bit.ly/32GOAXb> or call 800-321-3010 or 202-628-2100 and ask for the NLIHC rate. Rooms are limited, so register early. The cutoff is March 6, 2020.

Register for the 2020 NLIHC Housing Policy Forum [today!](#)

NLIHC Housing Leadership Awards

Honor Jennifer Ho, Shauna Sorrells, and Bill Faith at March 26 Leadership Awards Reception

Honor the 2020 Housing Leadership Award Honorees **Jennifer Leimaile Ho, Bill Faith** and **Shauna Sorrells**, who will be recognized at the **38th Annual Housing Leadership Awards Reception** on March 26, 2020 at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington, DC. Register to [attend](#) the reception and/or make a contribution as an [organization](#) or [individual](#) in their honor.



The Dolbeare Lifetime Service Award, named for NLIHC’s founder Cushing Niles Dolbeare, a pioneering leader of the early affordable housing movement, will be bestowed to **Bill Faith** for his many years of

leadership, dedication and tireless work to secure decent, safe, and affordable homes for the lowest-income people in Ohio and across the U.S. Bill is the executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio and former NLIHC board chair.



Bill Faith

The Sheila Crowley Housing Justice Award, named after former NLIHC President and CEO Sheila Crowley who led NLIHC for more than 17 years, will be bestowed to **Jennifer Ho**, commissioner of Minnesota Housing and former senior advisor at HUD and deputy director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). She will receive the Crowley Award for her outstanding work to end homelessness and housing poverty in the U.S. since 1999 at Hearth Connection, USICH, HUD, Minnesota Housing, and beyond.



Jennifer Ho

The final award is named for Senator Edward Brooke (R-MA), who championed low-income housing as a U.S. senator and later as chair of the NLIHC board of directors. **Shauna Sorrells** will receive the 2020 Edward W. Brooke Housing Leadership Award posthumously for her unwavering commitment to ending homelessness and housing poverty in the U.S. over many years at HUD, at the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, and on the NLIHC Board of Directors.



Shauna Sorrells

Come celebrate the contributions of Shauna, Bill and Jennifer at the 2020 Housing Leadership Reception on March 26 at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington DC! Register for the event at: <https://bit.ly/362lyDf>. (Note: A separate ticket from the NLIHC Housing Policy Forum is required for the Leadership Awards Reception.)

Recognize these outstanding individuals by making a donation to NLIHC in their honor!

Donate as an individual at: <https://bit.ly/34ng1FP>
Donate as an organization at: <https://bit.ly/2WyFnOb>

Your donation will be recognized in the Leadership Awards Reception program. The contribution will support NLIHC's mission to achieve socially just public policy to ensure the lowest-income people have decent, affordable homes.

The 2020 Leadership Awards Reception will be held on the second evening of NLIHC's 2020 Housing Policy Forum: *Ending Homelessness & Housing Poverty* taking place March 25-27, 2020. Register for the Forum at: <https://bit.ly/2PutSGn> and/or Leadership Awards Reception at: <https://bit.ly/362lyDf>

Opportunity Starts at Home

Community Catalyst Encourages Health Plans to Invest in Affordable Housing

A recent [issue brief](#) from the Center for Consumer Engagement in Health Innovation at Community Catalyst explores how health plan resources can be used to invest in affordable housing. The health care system has increasingly focused on the non-medical drivers of health such as food security, transportation, and affordable, accessible housing. While many hospitals have begun to invest in these “social determinants of health,” fewer health plans have done so.

At a time when many health plans are highly capitalized, the report encourages them to invest a portion of their reserves back into the community. The issue brief provides background on the health plan regulatory and financial landscape, offers perspectives on the feasibility of health plan investments into housing and community development without adversely affecting their financial position, and describes the various options for making these investments.

“Health plans provide coverage for the medical expenses of their members,” write the authors. “Increasingly, however – and particularly in the context of a widespread shift in the health care system to value-based models – health plans’ payments are based, in part, on their members’ health outcomes. The adoption of this responsibility for outcomes follows the increasingly widespread understanding of the impact of social, environmental and economic factors on our health, including safe and affordable housing.”

[Community Catalyst](#), a member of the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) multi-sector affordable homes campaign's Steering Committee, is a national nonprofit advocacy organization working to build the consumer and community leadership required to transform the nation's health system.

Read the issue brief [here](#).

Follow the [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign on all social media platforms: [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Be sure to [sign up](#) for our e-newsletter to get the latest updates about the campaign, including new multi-sector partners, [calls to action](#), events, and [research](#).

Disaster Housing Recovery

House Passes Puerto Rico Earthquake Assistance Bill, President Threatens Veto

The House passed the “Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief and Puerto Rico Disaster Tax Relief Act of 2020” ([H.R. 5687](#)) by a vote of 235-158 on February 7. The \$4.7 billion recovery bill has [multiple provisions](#) designed to assist Puerto Rico recover from the recent earthquakes that devastated parts of the island. The White House released a [statement](#) threatening to veto the bill should it reach President Trump’s desk, raising concerns about the territory’s ability to handle the additional funding.

The bill includes more than \$3 billion in Community Development Block Grant–Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding, as well as funds for roads, nutrition assistance, and education. Amendments increase the amount of nutrition benefits available and require information about all of the funds provided by the bill be made available for individuals with limited English proficiency.

The supplemental does not, however, include any measures to roll back the severe restrictions placed on more than \$16 billion in recovery and mitigation assistance related to Hurricane Maria announced by HUD in January (see *Memo*, [1/27](#)). Those restrictions require the territorial government of Puerto Rico to make substantial changes to local law and policy before it can access the funding, resulting in a slower, less equitable recovery. Members of the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition – a group of over 850 local, state, and national organizations – sent a [letter](#) on February 6 to congressional leadership requesting action on the restrictions by amending the Emergency Supplemental bill.

The DHRC released a [statement on the vote on H.R. 5687](#), thanking the House for quick action to assist earthquake victims in Puerto Rico, calling on the Senate to pass the bill, and condemning the president’s veto threat. “President Trump’s threat to veto the earthquake relief bill for Puerto Rico is just the latest attempt by the administration to put American lives at risk,” the letter states. “We thank Speaker Pelosi and Chairwoman Lowry for their leadership in advancing critical disaster recovery resources. We look forward to working with them to ensure that Puerto Rico has the funding it needs – free from unnecessary and harmful restrictions – to fully recover from these disasters.”

Read the bill at: <https://bit.ly/2OzOITc>

Read the DHRC statement at: <https://bit.ly/2UBvfFA>

Additional Disaster Housing Recovery Updates - February 10, 2020

The following is a review of additional disaster housing recovery developments since the last edition of *Memo to Members and Partners* (for the article in the previous *Memo*, see [2/03](#)).

Federal Action and National News

Representatives [Darren Soto](#) (D-FL) and [Nydia Velazquez](#) (D-NY) hosted displaced earthquake survivors from Puerto Rico as guests at the 2020 State of the Union address on February 4.

A [blog post](#) from the Center for American Progress argues for three major moves the federal government should make in order to [prepare for climate change](#). One of them is passing the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC)-supported “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act.”

Architect Ricardo Álvarez-Díaz highlights post-disaster reconstruction as an opportunity to create both stronger infrastructure and communities. Mr. Álvarez-Díaz writes that “[utilizing resilient design](#)” better positions localities to withstand the impacts of natural disasters.

Midwestern Flooding

Indiana

St. Joseph County, IN, and FEMA are providing \$2.8 million dollars to demolish 16 homes that are prone to flooding. The land would be turned into open grass space and the county will not allow further building on the property. Residents express [mixed opinions](#) about the policy.

Tropical Storm Imelda and Hurricane Harvey

Texas

HUD [released](#) a set of mandatory rules that will guide how Texas officials use more than \$285 million in federal disaster relief funding.

San Marcos, TX, [seeks](#) public comments regarding a proposed draft of its \$24 million Community Development Block Grant-Mitigation Action Plan and proposed amendments to its \$33 million CDBG Action Plan for Disaster Recovery.

California Wildfires

Presidential candidates [responded](#) to a question posed by the *The Desert Sun* newspaper about how to confront wildfires in California. Housing was a priority in many of their answers.

Sonoma County, CA, officials [discuss the use](#) of nearly \$1 billion in federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs). Local officials are concerned that the state intends to use all of the tax credits for homeless housing projects throughout the state. County officials want the tax credits to be used solely for rebuilding housing in wildfire-affected areas. State officials assert that they propose using only unused funds for homeless housing. Because LIHTCs are vital for financing the rebuilding of affordable homes, the tax credit allocation committee will soon address the concerns.

Hurricane Michael

Puerto Rico

Peter J. Brown was [appointed](#) the Federal Reconstruction Coordinator for Puerto Rico. Mr. Brown's role includes being a direct liaison between Puerto Rico and the White House on reconstruction efforts.

Florida

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity submitted its state action plan for the \$633 million [first-of-its-kind](#) federal funding for disaster mitigation. Governor Ron DeSantis (R) expressed his desire for HUD to quickly review the plan so that funds can be deployed.

2016, 2017, and Older Disasters

West Virginia Flooding: [House Bill 4130](#) passed in both the House of Delegates and Senate. The bill aims to increase the number of competitive bids on housing reconstruction contracts. Delegate Dean Jeffries (R) says [this change](#) could bring construction cost down and encourage more local contractors to get involved.

Hurricane Irma: The Urban Land Institute issued a report last week [suggesting](#) a total remodeling of the greater Virgin Islands, as it is a "well-funded opportunity for change."

Hurricane Katrina: Auditors criticized the Louisiana Office of Community Development for not yet having clawed back [\\$963 billion](#) from homeowners who were incorrectly given money during recovery from Hurricane Katrina.

HUD

HUD Provides Guidance on Service and Support Animals for People with Disabilities

HUD published [Notice FHEO-2020-01](#) providing guidance on the obligation of housing providers under the Fair Housing Act to allow people with disabilities to have assistance animals as a “reasonable accommodation.”

There are two types of assistance animals, service animals and support animals. These are animals that do work, perform tasks, provide assistance, and/or provide therapeutic emotional support for individuals with disabilities. The guidance provides housing providers with best practices for complying with the Fair Housing Act when assessing requests from people who have disabilities to keep animals in their homes as a reasonable accommodation. Individuals with disabilities and advocates can also benefit from familiarity with the Notice.

The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful for a housing provider to refuse to make a reasonable accommodation someone with a disability may need to have equal opportunity to enjoy and use a dwelling. One common request housing providers receive is for a reasonable accommodation related to a provider’s no-pet or no-animal policies from people with disabilities so they may use assistance animals in their housing, including in public and common-use areas.

Assistance animals are not pets; they are either service or support animals. A housing provider may not exclude service animals or support animals or charge a fee or deposit for them.

The Notice defines a service animal as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability.

“Work or tasks” do not include emotional support; however, another type of animal other than a dog may provide emotional support, comfort, or well-being as a reasonable accommodation. Certain impairments might not be observable but may form the basis of a request of an emotional support animal. For an animal to be eligible for consideration as a support animal, it must be one that is commonly kept in homes, such as a dog, cat, small bird, rabbit, hamster, gerbil, other rodent, fish, turtle, or other small, domesticated animal. The Notice does not consider as common household animals reptiles (other than turtles), barnyard animals, monkeys, kangaroos, and other non-domesticated animals. Someone may request a “unique” animal as a support animal but must provide extra documentation as described in the Notice.

The Notice states that it should be read together with HUD’s regulations prohibiting discrimination under the Fair Housing Act ([24 CFR Part 100, Subpart D](#)) and the HUD/Department of Justice (DOJ) [Joint Statement on Reasonable Accommodation under the Fair Housing Act](#),

A housing provider may also be subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and therefore should also refer to DOJ’s regulations implementing Title II and Title III of the ADA at 28 C.F.R. Parts 35 and 36, and DOJ’s guidance on service animals, [Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA](#) and [ADA Requirements: Service Animals](#)

Upon first reading, fair housing and disability advocates have deemed the Notice acceptable. These advocates had been working with HUD for years, and most of their input seems to be included.

Notice FHEO-2020-01 is at: <https://bit.ly/2v6NBDQ>

The HUD/DOJ Joint Statement on Reasonable Accommodation under the Fair Housing Act is at: <https://bit.ly/396X4cG>

DOJ's *Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA* is at: <https://bit.ly/395m2t0>

DOJ's *ADA Requirements: Service Animals* is at: <https://bit.ly/36TikBr>

Research

Report Finds Significant Increase in Student Homelessness

The National Center for Homeless Education released a report, [*Federal Data Summary: School Years 2015-16 through 2017-18*](#), which summarizes data about the demographics and academic performance of grade school and high school students experiencing homelessness. The number of students enrolled in public school districts that were identified as experiencing homelessness increased 15% between the 2015-16 and 2017-18 school years. More than 1.5 million children in the public school system were identified as experiencing homelessness.

The report summarizes data submitted to the U.S. Department of Education about students in public school districts who were experiencing homelessness during school years 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18. All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Bureau of Indian Education are required to report such information to ensure that they are meeting the goals of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY). The EHCY program, part of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, requires public schools to identify, enroll, and stabilize the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. McKinney-Vento specifies that children and youth experiencing homelessness have a right to school enrollment, to remain in their school of origin, to receive transportation to school, and to receive supports for academic success.

During the 2017-18 school year, states identified 1,508,265 enrolled students as experiencing homelessness, an increase of 15% between 2015 and 2018. Sixteen states reported that their homeless student populations grew by 10% or more during that period. The rate of increase varied by grade level; for example, the number of first graders experiencing homelessness increased by 4.9%, the number of fifth graders experiencing homelessness increased by 20.3%, and the number of high school seniors experiencing homelessness increased by 22.9%. Students were included only if they were enrolled in a public school and identified by a local education agency's homelessness liaison. Consequently, the authors note that their count may underestimate the total population.

Homelessness liaisons report students' primary nighttime residence at the time they are identified as experiencing homelessness. During the 2017-2018 school year, 74% of students so identified were doubled-up with others due to a loss of housing or economic hardship, 12% were in shelters or transitional housing, 7% were living in hotels or motels, and 7% were unsheltered. Compared to 2015-2016, the number of unsheltered students rose by 137%, and the number of students in hotels or motels rose 24%.

States also report information about several subgroups of homeless students. In 2017-18, 8.6% of all homeless students (129,370) were unaccompanied youth, not in the custody of a parent or guardian. More than 17% of homeless students (261,384) were English learners, although only 10% of the total student population are

English learners. The share of students in the public school system with an identified disability is less than 14%, while the percentage of homeless students with an identified disability was 18% (271,464) in 2017-18.

States are required to administer regular academic assessments in reading, mathematics, and science in order to assess how well they are enabling all children to meet academic achievement standards. The Department of Education’s database includes data on the performance of homeless students on those assessments. Interstate comparison is difficult, because states define and measure student achievement in different ways. Measuring progress over time is also complicated, because the students experiencing homelessness may change from year to year. The authors compare the percentage of homeless students who received proficient scores on state assessments to the percentage of economically disadvantaged students who received proficient scores. (“Economic disadvantage” is defined in various ways by states, but households that are eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or free school meals are identified as economically disadvantaged in some states.) Economically disadvantaged students consistently outscore homeless students by approximately 10 percentage points in most subjects and grades.

The final section of the report summarizes information about agencies or programs that collect data beyond what is gathered by the Department of Education to highlight how more robust interventions could be developed. The authors note that the Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Children and Families (ACF) administers Head Start and Early Head Start programs, which track enrolled, homeless students. The Street Outreach, Basic Center, and Transitional Living Programs administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the ACF collect information about youth served. Continuums of Care are required to assure the education rights of children served and designate homelessness liaisons.

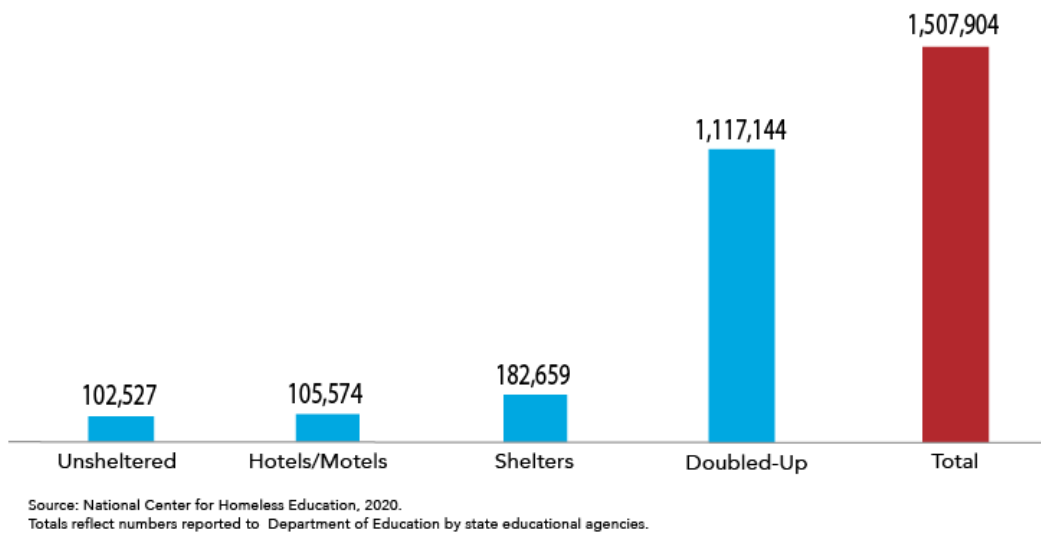
The report is at: <https://bit.ly/2OE5zEH>

More information about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs is on [page 4-65 of NLIHC’s 2019 Advocates’ Guide](#).

Fact of the Week

More Than 1.5 Million Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness in 2017-2018

Number of Students Identified as Experiencing Homelessness in 2017-2018, by Primary Nighttime Residence



Source: National Center for Homeless Education, 2020.

From the Field

Washington Advocates Urge Lawmakers to Address the State's Housing and Homelessness Crisis

More than 600 advocates across the state of Washington gathered at the capitol in Olympia on February 3, urging lawmakers to take bold action to expand access to affordable homes and end homelessness during Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day. Advocates rallied on the state capitol steps and attended meetings with their lawmakers to discuss solutions to the housing challenges in their communities. The event was organized by the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, an NLIHC state partner, and supported by the Resident Action Project, which coordinates and elevates the advocacy roles of people with lived experience. Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day included advocacy workshops, pre-scheduled meetings with state legislators, and panel discussions on policy solutions to the affordable housing and homelessness crisis.

At the start of the short, two-month legislative session, hundreds of Washington residents came together on Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day to urge their legislators to pass bills that would invest in affordable, accessible homes for low-income households, reduce barriers to building affordable homes, increase housing stability, and take essential steps to prevent and end homelessness. Participants received an [advocacy packet](#) that included fact sheets on state and federal policy priorities, legislative agenda talking points, and social media resources to strengthen their advocacy efforts.

Advocates across Washington expressed support for bills that would: invest an additional \$10 million in the Housing Trust Fund to preserve affordable homes; permit local government approval of a 0.1% sales tax for affordable housing (H.B. 1590/S.B. 6126); create a Real Estate Excise tax exemption for those selling a property to a nonprofit that acquires it for affordable housing (H.B. 2634/S.B. 6366); and ensure that nonprofit affordable housing providers can continue to serve very low-income households at 60% of AMI and below

without triggering unforeseen tax liability (H.B. 2384/S.B. 6232). Additional policy priorities include: prohibiting “no cause” evictions (H.B. 2453/S.B. 6379); requiring landlords to accept a payment plan for move-in costs (H.B. 1694); eliminating the Aged, Blind, or Disabled Shelter Penalty; and establishing a pilot program to provide rental assistance to seniors and adults with disabilities.

The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance and the Washington Housing Alliance Action Fund collaborated with their member organizations and incorporated feedback from community members across the state to develop a [2020 legislative agenda](#). Discussions with service providers, low-income housing developers, local advocates, and people experiencing homelessness and housing instability revealed the urgent need for policies that would address the lack of affordable housing, protect tenants, fund homelessness interventions, and reduce barriers to building affordable housing. The coalitions’ state-level policy priorities would increase access to decent, accessible, and affordable homes across Washington and address the racial and systemic inequities that created and maintain the disproportionate impact of homelessness on communities of color.

“We are excited by the strong turnout of advocates once again to build momentum for these important policy changes,” said Rachael Myers, executive director of the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance and member of NLIHC’s board of directors. “Legislators clearly value the input of impacted residents, advocates, and community leaders, and these voices will be the key to victory in 2020.”

Information about the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance is at: www.wliha.org

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Week of February 2

The following are some of the news stories that NLIHC contributed to during the week of February 2:

- “Maine House passes \$80 million affordable housing credit,” *Bangor Daily News*, February 6 at: <https://tinyurl.com/ruevmnr>
 - “California's rising rents, severe housing shortage fuel homelessness,” *NBC News.com*, February 2 at: <https://tinyurl.com/vnyspq8>
 - “Harvard housing report: U.S. renters are richer, older, and dealing with a more unequal market,” *Curbed*, January 31 at: <https://tinyurl.com/r6c2gsj>
 - “All Eyes On Oakland: Moms 4 Housing Continues To Fight,” *Essence Magazine*, January 31 at: <https://tinyurl.com/se2umlp>
 - “Housing in Brief: 1,000 People Show Up for 129 Affordable Apartments in Charlotte,” *Next City*, January 31 at: <https://tinyurl.com/wlsguc3>
-

NLIHC News

Where to Find Us – February 10

NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel and other NLIHC staff will be speaking at the following events in the coming months:

- Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disabilities’ Information Session and Overview of Voter Registration Drive, Philadelphia, PA, February 25
- [Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless Legislative Action Day 2020](#), Boston, MA, February 27

- [NYHC March Thought Leader Event](#), New York, NY, March 12
- Making Change Happen: Effective Advocacy for Affordable Housing, La Vista, NE, March 16
- [YIMBY Town 2020](#), Portland, OR, April 3
- Humility Homes and Services 30 Years Celebration, Davenport, IA, April 18
- [Building Michigan Communities Conference](#), Lansing, MI, April 28
- Tulsa Mayor's Development Roundtable, Tulsa, OK, April 30
- [Princeton Community Housing Annual Homes Build Opportunity Gala](#), Princeton, NJ, June 13
- [HousingWorks RI Annual Factbook Lunch](#), Providence, RI, October 16

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