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Congress

House Committee Passes Bills to Invest in Affordable Housing and Fair Housing Enforcement

The House Committee on Financial Services passed several bills, including the “Housing Is Infrastructure Act” ([H.R. 5187](#)) and the “Housing Fairness Act of 2020” ([H.R. 149](#)), during a vote on February 27. H.R. 5187 would invest more than \$100 billion in affordable housing and community development programs; it passed the committee by a vote of 33-25. A group of 205 national, state, and local organizations sent a [letter](#) on February 25 urging Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) to include investments in affordable housing as part of any infrastructure package. H.R. 149 would authorize additional funding for fair housing enforcement, make needed reforms to fair housing programs, and reinstate HUD’s 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule; the bill passed by a vote of 33-23. NLIHC supports both bills, which will now move to the full House for a vote.

The “Housing Is Infrastructure Act,” introduced by Chair Maxine Waters (D-CA), would authorize \$100.6 billion to improve affordable housing infrastructure. The bill would provide a one-year investment of \$5 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF), \$70 billion to address the public housing capital needs backlog, \$1 billion to address severe housing needs on tribal lands, and \$1 billion to fund the backlog of capital needs for USDA Section 515 and 514 rural housing stock, among other investments.

As NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel stated in [testimony](#) she gave before the House Financial Services Committee on April 30, 2019, an infrastructure package provides a unique opportunity to address one of the most critical issues facing extremely low-income families today – the lack of decent, accessible, and affordable housing. The aforementioned letter to Speaker Pelosi urged the inclusion of infrastructure funding particularly for public housing and the national HTF. Such investments would help build new affordable homes targeted to people with the lowest incomes through the HTF and preserve the homes of nearly 1 million households living in public housing.

The “Housing Fairness Act of 2020,” introduced by Representative Al Green (D-TX), would increase funding for HUD’s Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP), which supports nonprofit fair housing organizations’ education and enforcement activities. FHIP grantee organizations processed more than three fourths of all housing discrimination complaints in 2018. The bill would authorize a total of \$735 million over 11 years for FHIP. By reinstating the 2015 AFFH rule, the bill would overturn the Trump administration’s actions suspending the rule in 2018 and issuing its own proposal in January of this year that completely undermines the goals of the Fair Housing Act (See [Memo 1/13](#)). The proposed AFFH rule is open for public comment through March 16; learn more and submit comments opposing the rule at: www.FightForHousingJustice.org

View the webcast of the committee vote at: <https://bit.ly/383AaSR>

NLIHC’s letter of support for H.R. 5187 is at: <https://bit.ly/2vPc9Bt>

Read the letter to Speaker Pelosi at: <https://bit.ly/397uRTw>

Learn more about H.R. 5187 at: <https://bit.ly/2VusRkf>

Learn more about H.R. 149 at: <https://bit.ly/2wd10dO>

House Committee Holds Hearing on Challenges and Opportunities for Successful Reentry of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security held a hearing, “Returning Citizens: Challenges and Opportunities for Reentry,” on February 27. Formerly incarcerated individuals must navigate significant challenges upon reentry into their communities after leaving prison or jail, particularly in obtaining safe, affordable, accessible housing. These challenges place returning individuals at risk of housing instability, homelessness, and ultimately recidivism. Witnesses discussed barriers to successful re-entry faced by individuals and highlighted potential reforms that would provide returning citizens the stability and opportunities needed to successfully reintegrate after incarceration.

Witnesses included John Harriel, diversity manager and superintendent at 2nd CALL; Conan Harris, principal at Conan Harris & Associates; Nancy La Vigne, vice president of justice policy at the Urban Institute; Ronald Lampard, senior director of the Criminal Justice Task Force and Civil Justice Task Force at the American Legislative Exchange Council; Vanessa Martin, director of reentry services at the Office of Diversion and Reentry, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services; and Jesse Wiese, national director of Academy Advancement at the Prison Fellowship.

“Laws or policies that restrict individuals from associating with felons might result in homelessness,” Subcommittee Chair Karen Bass (D-CA) noted in her opening statement. “Returning citizens are ten times more likely to be homeless than the general public. If you cannot find a place to live, cannot find a job, it should be no surprise that in order to survive, you re-offend.”

“One of the most pressing [challenges] continues to be access to housing,” said Mr. Harris. “The truth of the matter is, one of the biggest barriers to being able to get out and stay out [of prison] is housing.” Representative Cedric Richmond (D-LA) agreed, “We have so many people that can’t go home on probation or parole because they don’t have stable housing. [Housing] is one of the biggest determining factors in whether you get back into the [prison] system.”

Witnesses noted that successful reentry programs should focus on the holistic needs of individuals, including finding returning citizens safe, stable, affordable housing. “Successful reentry programs need to be both holistic – addressing all of the needs of an individual – and tailored, recognizing that people have different needs,” said Ms. La Vigne.

NLIHC recently published a new issue of *Tenant Talk* exploring the challenges formerly incarcerated individuals face in accessing housing upon reentry. Read the latest *Tenant Talk* at: <https://bit.ly/2vmU6mk>

A recording of the hearing is at: <https://bit.ly/3cfRHKQ>

More about the challenges people with criminal records face in accessing housing is on page [6-27](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

Disaster Housing Recovery

DHRC-Supported “Housing Survivors of Major Disasters Act” Unanimously Passes House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

“[The Housing Survivors of Major Disasters Act](#)” (H.R. 2914), introduced by Representative Adriano Espaillat (D-NY) and Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), was unanimously approved by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on February 26 – thanks in large part to the hard work and advocacy of the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC). The bill was written with input from DHRC members and includes many of the coalition’s top disaster recovery priorities.

The legislation addresses the significant [title-documentation challenges](#) that have resulted in thousands of eligible disaster survivors being wrongfully denied FEMA assistance. These challenges have been common in many disaster-impacted areas but occurred at a higher rate in Puerto Rico, where it is estimated that 77,000 households were wrongfully denied assistance for such reasons. The bill would ensure eligible survivors can more easily navigate the FEMA application process.

The bill would provide a new framework to make it easier for disaster survivors to prove residency in disaster-impacted areas, either by completing a “declarative statement” form or by submitting a broader range of acceptable documents such as utility bills, credit card statements, pay stubs, and school registration, in lieu of a formal title to property or leases. The creation and distribution of a declarative statement form – like the one created by DHRC Puerto Rico Working Group members after Hurricane Maria - is especially important to help low-income renters, people experiencing homelessness, residents of manufactured housing, people living on tribal lands, and other survivors get the assistance to which they are eligible. After past disasters, FEMA turned away many of these survivors because they lacked updated title or lease documentation, even though they were eligible for help.

The bill would also require FEMA and HUD to analyze and publish a report on temporary disaster housing solutions, including the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). DHAP, which provides housing assistance and wrap-around services to disaster survivors, has been considered a best practice – particularly for marginalized households – by past Republican and Democratic administrations. But FEMA has failed to join with HUD in providing DHAP after the most recent disasters. NLIHC and other DHRC advocates argue the study and report that would be required by this bill would help build the case for why survivors need DHAP and why it should be used in all future disaster recovery efforts.

“As the recent events in Puerto Rico have shown,” stated NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel in [press release](#) announcing the bill’s passage out of committee, “when the most vulnerable survivors are unable to access assistance programs, thousands are forced to return to uninhabitable homes, sleep in cars or shelters, double- or triple-up with other low-income families, or pay far too much of their incomes on rent, putting them at higher risk of evictions and, in worst cases, homelessness. Congress should immediately enact this legislation and hold FEMA accountable for its continued failure to address the housing needs of the lowest-income disaster survivors in Puerto Rico and across the country.”

The committee passage of this bill would not have been possible without the leadership of Senator Warren and Representative Espaillat or the concerted efforts of DHRC members and partners. The DHRC will continue working to improve the legislation as it goes to the House floor for a vote. Advocates should urge their members of Congress to vote in favor of the bill.

Read the text of the “Housing Survivors of Major Disasters Act” at: <https://bit.ly/398bvO6>

Read a press release from Representative Adriano Espaillat’s office at: <https://bit.ly/3a5c0Zs>

Read an article by DHRC member Ivis Garcia on title issues in Puerto Rico at: <https://bit.ly/3caYZzs>

Additional Disaster Housing Recovery Updates - March 2, 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 [02/24](#)).

Federal Action & National News

Thousands of Americans still do not have flood insurance, reports [Marketplace](#). The number of insured households in Mississippi – which has been experiencing record flooding – has declined by 10,000 in recent years. Mississippi Insurance Commissioner Mike Chaney said that families that cannot afford the high insurance premiums have “either got to lower their standard of living or move somewhere else.”

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO) [introduced](#) the “Preventing Disaster Revictimization Act.” The bill would prevent FEMA from asking disaster victims to return financial assistance provided in error. The bill also would require the agency to report on the number of errors it has had in its financial assistance program.

Midwest Flooding

Farm safety experts [shared](#) lessons learned almost one year after historic Nebraska flooding.

It is unclear where the additional [\\$63.3 million](#) needed to rebuild and repair Iowa flood victims’ homes will come from. Residents are especially concerned because they face the threat of more flooding this year.

Puerto Rico Earthquakes

[Vox](#) published an overview of the disaster recovery crisis in Puerto Rico, specifically citing the emergency earthquake-assistance legislation passed by the House earlier this month. The bill has yet to be taken up by the Senate.

Puerto Rico Disaster Recovery Special Representative Rear Admiral Peter J. Brown will be the [keynote speaker](#) at the Puerto Rico Conference 2020 “Empowering Investment” on February 26.

Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont is [allocating](#) \$75,000 from the Connecticut Department of Housing’s operating budget to house earthquake evacuees from Puerto Rico.

Tropical Storm Imelda & Hurricane Harvey

Texas

Hidalgo County Commissioner David Fuentes was [recognized](#) for successfully bringing together officials to receive billions of dollars in federal disaster relief to the region. He convened Democrats, Republicans, members of Congress, HUD, and FEMA to discuss and build support for responding to the needs of South Texas, according to Representative Vicente Gonzalez (D-TX).

Natural disasters from 2019 are [expected](#) to bring an increase in mortgage delinquencies for potentially the next 12 months or more in Texas and other impacted areas.

Group flood insurance policies provided to 6,704 Texas households will end on October 24. FEMA provided these [policies](#) to families affected by Hurricane Harvey, but the agency says those who do not buy standard flood insurance policies after the group insurance expires will likely not receive federal disaster assistance for their homes after future floods.

Hurricane Matthew and Hurricane Florence

North Carolina

The Planning Board of Lumberton, NC, [approved](#) a re-zoning request for 72 affordable multi-family units to be rebuilt because of damage caused by Hurricane Matthew in 2016. The City Council will hear the request on March 4.

South Carolina

The South Carolina House Ways and Means Committee [voted](#) to add \$50 million to its budget proposal to create a disaster relief fund to protect against future catastrophic damage in the state.

Horry County, SC, leaders are [attempting](#) to obtain federal funding from HUD or FEMA to implement a flood-mitigation buyout program for their flood-prone areas.

California Wildfires

Seana O'Shaughnessy, president of Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC)-member Community Housing Improvement Program of Chico, CA, offered comments in opposition to [state plans](#) to allocate over \$100 million in federal housing funding to fire-damaged areas based on the amount of shovel-ready projects instead of housing need. Ms. O'Shaughnessy argued that allocating the funding in this way benefits resource-rich counties while punishing the areas hardest hit.

Butte County, CA, which suffered extensive damage in the 2017 Camp Fire, is seeking to receive a substantial share of the nearly \$1 billion in disaster recovery funds allocated to the state by HUD, but it will likely take [more than a year](#) to find out where the funds will be directed.

The issue of how to best distribute the [\\$100 million](#) in housing tax credits for communities impacted by California wildfires is being debated among officials and housing developers.

Hurricane Michael

Florida

Millions of dollars in disaster relief have not been sufficient to repair the [damage](#) caused by Hurricane Michael, according to the North Florida Long Term Recovery Group, and rebuilding projects have slowed dramatically.

National Housing Trust Fund

FHFA Authorizes \$326.4 Million Disbursement for National Housing Trust Fund for 2020

Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) Director Mark Calabria [announced](#) on February 27 that \$326.4 million will be available for the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) in 2020. HUD will now use the formula based on the HTF statute and HTF regulations to determine how much each state will have available for 2020. The HTF allocations from previous years were: \$173.6 million (2016), \$219.2 million (2017), \$266.8 million (2018), and \$247.7 million (2019). Dr. Calabria also announced that the Capital Magnet Fund, administered by the Department of Treasury, will receive \$175.8 million.

The HTF was created on July 30, 2008 when the president signed into law the "Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008" (HERA). The statute specified an initial dedicated source of revenue to come from an assessment of 4.2 basis points (0.042%) on the new business of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (this is unrelated to profits). The HTF receives 65% of the assessment, and the Capital Magnet Fund (CMF) receives 35%. During calendar year 2019, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac set aside the required 4.2 basis points. Approximately 60 days after the close of a calendar year Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac then transfer the funds to HUD for the HTF and to the Department of the Treasury for the CMF. HUD usually announces state allocations in early May.

The HTF is a block grant to states, distributed by formula based on four factors that consider only renter household needs. Seventy-five percent of the value of the formula goes to the two factors that reflect the needs of extremely low-income (ELI) renters because the HTF statute requires the formula to give priority to ELI renters. ELI households have incomes less than the federal poverty line or 30% of the area median income (AMI), whichever is higher. The other two factors concern the renter needs of very low-income (VLI) households, which are households that have incomes between 31% and 50% of AMI.

The HTF is principally for the production, rehabilitation, preservation, and operation of rental housing for ELI households. The HTF statute requires that at least 75% of the funds provided to a state that are used for rental housing must benefit ELI households and no more than 25% may be used to benefit VLI households. For homeowner activities, the statute requires that all assisted homeowners have incomes less than 50% of AMI. When there is less than \$1 billion available to the HTF in a given year, the rule requires that 100% of a state's allocation must benefit ELI households.

The statute limits the amount of HTF used for homeownership activities to 10%, inferring that at least 90% of a state's annual HTF allocation must be used for rental housing activities. The preamble to the interim rule interprets the law differently, however, asserting that only 80% must be used for rental activities.

The FHFA announcement is at: <https://tinyurl.com/wfbaa3t>

More information about the national Housing Trust Fund is on [page 3-1](#) of NLIHC's *2019 Advocates' Guide*.

State-specific information is on NLIHC's HTF webpage at: <https://tinyurl.com/vxkkqhs>

More information about the Capital Magnet Fund is on [page 8-1](#) of NLIHC's *2019 Advocates' Guide*.

HUD Posts First Monthly Housing Trust Fund Open Activities Reports

HUD's Office of Community Planning and Development (CPD) [posted](#) the first national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) "[Open Activities Reports](#)" for each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Advocates familiar with the HOME program's "Open Activities Reports" will recognize similarities with the HTF reports. CPD also posted the first "[Vacant Units Reports](#)." CPD will update and post these reports at the end of each month. The initial reports include information as of December 31, 2019. The reports are on CPD's [Housing Trust Fund page](#) under "HTF Reports."

For each HTF project reported by a state, the HTF Open Activities Report (PR107) shows: city, ZIP code, activity type, number of HTF-assisted units, amount of HTF resources, initial funding date, and amount of HTF drawn down. Activity types include new construction, acquisition and new construction, rehabilitation, acquisition and rehabilitation, and acquisition only. The only project identifier is its "IDIS Activity ID" number, so interested advocates will have to ask the state which projects are reflected in the HTF Open Activities Report, if they are not obvious by the city and ZIP code identifiers. [IDIS](#) is CPD's computer-based management information system used for all CPD programs.

The Vacant Units Report (PR106) shows the program year from which a project was awarded HTF funds, the date a project was initially funded or completed, and which HTF-assisted units, if any, are vacant. Again, because the only project identifier is the "IDIS Activity ID" number, interested advocates will have to ask the state which project has the vacant unit(s).

The [HTF IDIS User Manual](#) indicates that states will be reporting most of the information that NLIHC gathered from states regarding their 2016 HTF allocations (see “[Getting Started](#)” and [Supplement](#)) and that NLIHC is gathering related to their 2017 HTF allocations. Information will include:

- Information about households initially occupying HTF-assisted units, including: race, ethnicity, family type (single/non-elderly, elderly, single parent, two parents, other), household size, and household annual income at the time of initial occupancy (0-30% of area median income [AMI], income greater than 30% AMI but at or less than the federal poverty line, or income between the higher of 31% AMI and the federal poverty line and 50% AMI).
- Information about the unit initially occupied, including: number of bedrooms; total monthly rent (broken down by tenant contribution and any subsidy amount); rental assistance type if any (Housing Choice Vouchers, HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, other federal, state, or local tenant-based rental assistance, Project-Based Section 8, or other federal, state, or local project-based rental assistance); Section 504-accessibility; Energy Star certification; and number of years of affordability if greater than the required 30-year affordability period.
- Information about designated units (both total and HTF-assisted), including:
 - Disabled individuals or families with a person with a disability other than a mobility impairment (there is no field for disabled individuals or families with a mobility impairment)
 - Homeless individuals:
 - Of the units designated for homeless individuals, the number for chronically homeless individuals
 - Of the units designated for homeless individuals, the number for homeless veteran individuals (there is no field for veteran individuals who are not homeless)
 - Homeless families:
 - Of the units designated for homeless families, the number for chronically homeless families
 - Of the units designated for homeless families, the number for homeless veteran families (there is no field for veteran families who are not homeless)
 - Persons with HIV/AIDS
 - Survivors of domestic violence
 - Homeless youth
 - Youth aging out of foster care
(There is no field for units designated for people re-entering the community from the criminal justice system.)
- Information about the HTF assistance will include whether it is provided as an amortized loan, deferred payment loan, grant, or other.
- Information about other funding sources will include: HOME, CDBG, FHA funds, other federal funds (it is not clear if this includes Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Funds), state or local housing trust funds, other state or local funds, tax-exempt bond proceeds, Low Income Housing Tax Credit equity, private loans, owner cash contributions, and private grants.

NLIHC learned from an email from CPD that most of this excellent information will not be posted in other HTF reports the way the Open Activities Reports will be. An “HTF Production Report” (PR110) will be posted each year, however, modeled after the [HOME National Production Report](#). Information about the form of the HTF funding (e.g., deferred payment loan or grant) or about other funding sources (e.g. HOME, LIHTC, etc.) will not be in PR110. CPD staff will, however, provide reports if requested.

For years CPD has posted [HTF Deadline Compliance Status Reports](#) because HTF allocations must be committed to specific projects within two years of a state signing a grant agreement, and committed funds must be spent within five years.

HTF Open Activity Reports are at: <https://bit.ly/2PpZ3By>

HTF Vacant Unit Activity Reports are at: <https://bit.ly/2HVgmGD>

HTF Deadline Compliance Status Reports are at: <https://bit.ly/32rUPyF>

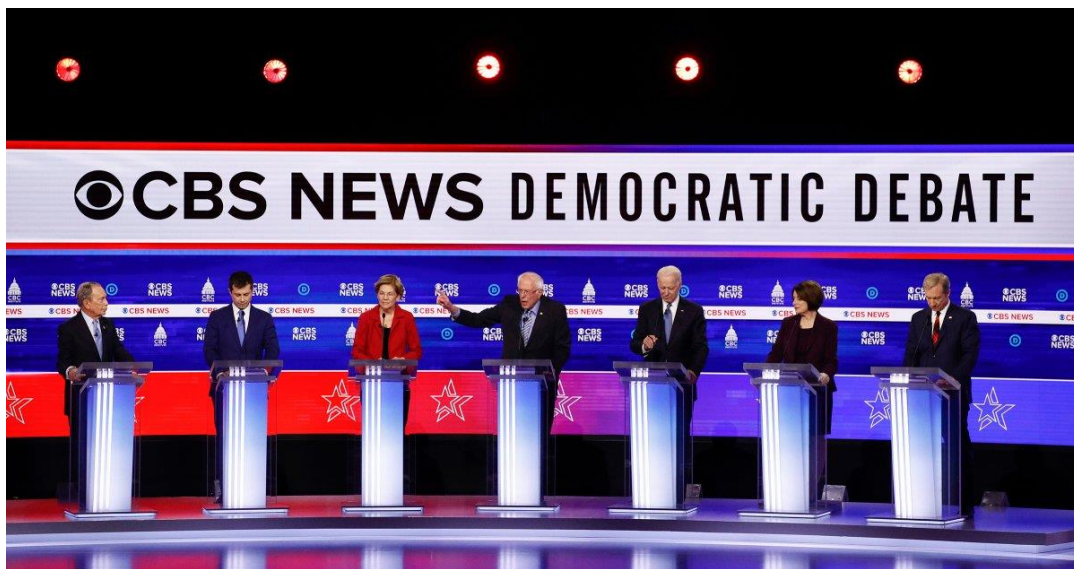
The HTF IDIS User Manual is at: <https://bit.ly/32rVBM5>

More information about the national HTF is on page 3-1 [page 3-1](#) of NLIHC's *2019 Advocates' Guide*. (The *2020 Advocates' Guide* is coming later in March.)

Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020

Candidates Respond to Question on Affordable Housing during South Carolina Debate

Seven Democratic candidates for president - Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, Bernie Sanders, Pete Buttigieg, Tom Steyer and Mike Bloomberg – took to the stage for a presidential debate hosted by CBS and the DNC, in Charleston, SC, on February 25. NLIHC and our partners in the non-partisan *Our Homes, Our Votes 2020* candidate and voter engagement project have worked to ensure candidates tell voters how they would address the nation's affordable housing and homelessness crisis: we have [educated](#) and [met with candidates](#), urging them to put forward comprehensive plans to the crisis; [pushed moderators to ask candidates for their solutions](#); and, in advance of the debate, [worked with debate co-sponsor the Congressional Black Caucus Institute](#). Our efforts paid off!



During the debate, moderator Major Garrett, host of CBS's *60 Minutes*, asked a question submitted through Twitter to Senator Klobuchar, "How will your policy address and ensure affordable housing and education equity for minimum wage workers?" Here's some of what the candidates had to say:

[Senator Klobuchar:](#)

"One sure way we can make sure that kids get a good start is if they have a roof over their head and a stable place to live. So the way you do that is, first of all, taking care of the Section 8 backlog of applicants. There are literally hundreds of thousands of people waiting. And I have found a way to pay for this and a way to make sure that people get off that list and get into housing. Secondly, you create incentives for affordable housing to be built and, third, to help people pay for it"

Senator Warren:

“It is not enough to talk about housing neutrally and just be race-blind. It is important to recognize the role that the federal government played for decades and decades in discriminating against African-Americans having an opportunity to buy homes. . . . I have a housing plan, and what it has in it specifically [deals] with the effects of red-lining. We can no longer pretend that everything is race-neutral. We have got to address race consciously.”

Mayor Bloomberg:

“Let me just say, when you're talking about affordable housing, we created 175,000 units of affordable housing in New York City. [Members of] Congress . . . they say they can't get it done, can't get it done. But if you change something like the president, they would.”

Vice President Biden:

“I provide for the opportunity for first-time home buyers to be able to have a \$15,000 tax credit so they can get the mortgage at the front end and be able to keep it. . . . I go after those people who are involved gentrification. I make sure that with regard to housing, we allow people - look, right now if you live in a Black neighborhood and you have the same exact house as the guy across the street in a white neighborhood has, your house is valued significantly less than the white, the same exact house. We've got to deal with the institutional racism.”

Mayor Buttigieg:

“All of these things are connected, housing, wages, the ability to get anything meaningful done on criminal justice reform. All of these things are going to be harder to deal with as long as Black voices are systematically excluded from political participation.”

Mr. Steyer:

“Every single policy area in the United States has a gigantic subtext of race. We're talking about education. We're talking about criminal justice. We're talking about housing. We're talking about loans. I started a bank to basically correct the injustice in the financial services industry. Basically, to make loans to Black-owned, Latino-owned, and women-owned businesses. We've supported over 8,000 affordable housing units.”

Senator Sanders did not answer this specific question but, as he has in each of the ten debates so far this cycle, he mentioned that more than half a million people in our country are experiencing homelessness.

See overviews of each of these candidates housing plans and more of what they have said about them at: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/>

Vice President Biden Releases Affordable Housing Plan

Former Vice President Joe Biden (D-DE) joined other Democratic presidential candidates in releasing plans to address the nation's affordable housing crisis. Vice President Biden's plan, released on February 25, would invest \$640 billion over 10 years “so every American has access to housing that is affordable, stable, safe and healthy, accessible, energy efficient and resilient, and located near good schools and with a reasonable commute to their jobs.” It would increase the supply of affordable housing, make rental assistance an entitlement for all

who qualify, provide a renter's tax credit, and invest in the proven Housing First model to end homelessness, among other provisions.

Vice President Biden's proposal would invest \$20 billion in the national [Housing Trust Fund](#) to support the construction and maintenance of affordable homes for people with the greatest needs. It would guarantee Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to every eligible household so these households will not have pay more than 30% of their incomes on their rents and utilities. The candidate's plan would provide \$5 billion in federal funding annually for a renter's tax credit to support individuals and families who may earn too much to qualify for a Section 8 voucher but still struggle to pay their housing costs. The plan would invest \$300 million in grants to incentivize local communities to eliminate exclusionary zoning policies, and it would implement the 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Rule requiring communities receiving certain federal funds to proactively identify and address historic patterns of segregation and discrimination.

All of the major Democratic presidential candidates have now released affordable housing plans in response to the nation's dire shortage of affordable homes. Nationwide, the shortfall of homes affordable and available to the lowest-income renters stands at 7 million, and just one in four deeply poor families that qualify for housing assistance receives it. In 99% of counties in the U.S., a full-time minimum-wage worker cannot afford a one-bedroom rental home at the Fair Market Rent, and seven out of the ten fastest-growing occupations in the U.S. do not pay enough to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment. Millions of the lowest-income households – seniors, people with disabilities, low-wage families with children, and others – are spending more than half of their incomes on their housing, with little left for food, medicines, and other necessities and at high risk of homelessness.

NLIHC's nonpartisan [Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020](#) candidate and voter engagement project is elevating solutions to the nation's housing crisis in the presidential campaign and tracking what all the candidates have to say about housing and homelessness. Learn more at: www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org

Read Vice President Joe Biden housing plan at: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/biden>

Fight for Housing Justice

Fight for Housing Justice Campaign Shares New Resources and Hosts Week of Action to Oppose Proposed AFFH Rule

More than 14,000 comments have been submitted in response to the Trump administration's proposed changes to the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. The proposed AFFH rule removes key civil rights protections and retreats from national efforts to enforce housing desegregation. To help advocates draft unique comments opposing this proposal, the [Fight for Housing Justice](#) campaign has three comment templates, including one for [legal aid advocates](#), another focused on [disability rights](#), and a general [sample letter](#) from NLIHC. NLIHC and other partners in the *Fight for Housing Justice* campaign will also be hosting a national ["Week of Action"](#) to encourage organizations and individuals to submit comments opposing the proposed rule before the March 16 deadline.

Partners in the *Fight for Housing Justice* campaign have created new resources to help organizations and individuals write and submit comments opposing HUD's proposal to radically alter the 2015 AFFH rule. The National Housing Law Project created a [template](#) designed for legal aid advocates, and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) created a [sample letter](#) focused on the potential negative impacts of the proposal on people with disabilities. CCD also created a [one-page fact sheet](#) explaining the basics of AFFH. The document is unbranded so organizations can use it in their own advocacy efforts.

Save the date for a national “[Week of Action](#)” March 9-13 to push back on the proposed rule before the March 16 comment deadline. Rally with other advocates from around the country for a series of events/activities such as comment parties, tweetstorms, and a Facebook-Live event, as a last collective effort before the comment period closes to let HUD know that we oppose the changes to the AFFH rule. More information about the Week of Action is available on the [Fight for Housing Justice](#) website. Begin planning an event/activity of your own now!

Comment templates and sample letters, fact sheets, news, and additional resources are at: www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh

You can also submit comments at: www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh

More about AFFH under the Trump/Carson administration is 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 on pages [7-14](#), [7-21](#), and [7-26](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

Federal Budget and Appropriations

House Subcommittee to Hold Hearing on HUD’s Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Request

The House Committee on Appropriations, Departments of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee will hold a hearing on the HUD budget request for FY 2021. HUD Secretary Ben Carson will be the sole witness. The hearing is scheduled for March 4 at 10:30 a.m. ET in Room 2358-A of the Rayburn House Office Building and will be available by live broadcast. Learn more and watch the hearing live at: <https://tinyurl.com/t4k7h3u>

Public Charge

Supreme Court Lifts Illinois Injunction on Public Charge Rule, Allowing Nationwide Implementation

The Supreme Court lifted an in Illinois state-wide injunction of the Trump administration’s final “public charge” rule (see *Memo*, [8/19/19](#)) on February 21. The 5-4 vote allows the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to officially implement the rule nationwide as of February 24, even as lower courts proceed with litigation challenging the rule’s legality. The [Protecting Immigrant Families](#) (PIF) campaign has [resources](#) available in various languages to ensure impacted communities and service providers understand their rights and the potential implications of the rule.

Noncitizens seeking admission to the U.S. or applying for lawful permanent resident status (green card) have long been subject to a review to determine whether they are, or might become, a “public charge,” defined as someone who might become “primarily dependent on the government.” DHS’s new rule expands the list of “public benefits” that could lead an immigrant to be considered a potential public charge to include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and federal housing assistance, such as public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, and Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance. Immigration officials will also now consider other factors, such as health, age, income, and English-language skills when making public charge determinations.

Most immigrants who are subject to the public charge test are not eligible for the programs included in the final rule, and eligible family member's use of these benefits does not count against an immigrant's application for admission or lawful permanent resident status. The PIF campaign has resources to ensure immigrants and their families understand how they might be impacted by the rule so they can make informed decisions. Understanding the impacts helps fight the fear the Trump administration is using to take away healthcare, food, and housing from millions of people.

The Supreme Court voted on January 27 to overturn a national injunction of the public charge rule (see *Memo*, [2/3](#)), but an injunction in Illinois stopped the rule from taking effect in that state. While the Supreme Court's February 21 decision allows DHS to implement the rule nationally, states and organizations have filed a total of nine lawsuits challenging the rule's legality that have yet to be decided. Congressional champions have also introduced bills, including the "Protect American Values Act" ([S.2482](#)) and the "No Federal Funds for Public Charge Act of 2019" ([H.R.3222](#)), prohibiting the use of federal funds to carry out the public charge rule. Advocates should urge their members of Congress to support these bills and similar proposals.

Resources from the *Protecting Immigrant Families* campaign are at: protectingimmigrantfamilies.org

The "Protect American Values Act" is at: <https://bit.ly/3a80RqQ>

The "No Federal Funds for Public Charge Act of 2019" is at: <https://bit.ly/3cao0e6>

NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel's statement on the Supreme Court's public charge ruling is at: <https://bit.ly/2Py3KJQ>

NLIHC Housing Policy Forum 2020

Additional Sessions, Speakers Featured at NLIHC Housing Policy Forum 2020

NLIHC's Housing Policy Forum 2020: *Ending Homelessness and Housing Poverty*, taking place in Washington, DC, March 25-27 (register [here](#)) will feature a broad array of sessions, speakers, and panelists. Two more sessions announced today:

Our Homes, Our Votes 2020

NLIHC's *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020* project asked *all* presidential candidates to address the most important issue impacting our economic well-being, health, educational success and so much more: affordable homes. The candidates responded—releasing robust policy proposals, participating in events, and using national platforms to talk about the affordable housing crisis. This session will highlight the progress made—and the critical need to engage all candidates and voters throughout the rest of this election cycle. Because *affordable homes are built with ballots*. Confirmed/invited speakers:



Mindy Woods, advocate, Resident Action Project, Washington State



Bambie Hayes-Brown, CEO, Georgia Advancing Communities Together



Joey Lindstrom, director of field organizing, NLIHC



Renee Willis, VP for communications and field, NLIHC

Housing and Homelessness Policy to Achieve Racial Equity

Because the affordable housing and homelessness crises disproportionately impact people of color, housing policies need a racial equity lens to be effective. This introductory training will help advocates and practitioners better understand and incorporate racial equity in their work. Speaker/facilitator:



Brittani Manzo, director of public policy, National Innovation Services

Other confirmed and invited keynote speakers include:

- **Ibram X. Kendi**, National Book Club Award-winning author of *How to Be an Antiracist* and *Stamped from the Beginning*
- **U.S. Senator Rob Portman** (R-OH)
- **U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley** (D-MA)
- **U.S. Representative Lacy Clay** (D-MO)
- **U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar** (D-MN)
- **U.S. Senator Mazie Hirono** (D-HI) (*invited*)

Ken Burns film “East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story” – The Forum will also host a special 45-minute summary version of this Ken Burns executive-produced film, followed by a panel discussion with the film’s directors, a resident featured in the film, and policy experts.

Special Additional Sessions for Resident Leaders: NLIHC will offer additional low-income 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.

Register for the [Forum](#)!

Housing Leadership Awards Reception: NLIHC will be honoring the following individuals at the 2020 Housing Leadership Awards Reception on the evening of March 26: **Bill Faith**, executive director, Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, and former NLIHC board chair; **Jennifer Ho**, commissioner, Minnesota Housing; and **Shauna Sorrells** (posthumous), NLIHC board member and COO, Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County.

Register for the [Leadership Awards Reception](#)! (*A separate ticket from the Forum is required.*)

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.

First of Two Capitol Hill Day Preparation Webinars Happening on March 5

NLIHC will hold two webinars to prepare advocates for NLIHC's annual Capitol Hill Lobby Day taking place on March 27. The webinars will discuss effective advocacy and NLIHC's policy priorities. The first webinar, "Advocacy 101," an introduction to effective advocacy, is on Thursday, March 5 at 2:00 pm ET. Register at: <https://bit.ly/32vcZ2u>

In "Advocacy 101," the NLIHC field team will cover how a bill becomes a law, the federal budget process, and tips for effective advocacy. The session will also include a mock legislative visit. The webinar is an excellent training opportunity for those new to advocating with members of Congress or their staff.

The second webinar, "NLIHC 2020 Forum Policy Priorities," an overview of NLIHC's policy priorities and key Capitol Hill Day talking points, will take place on March 12 at 2:00 pm ET. The NLIHC policy team will discuss key bills before Congress and specific requests advocates should be making to increase federal investments in affordable homes. Sign up for the March 12 webinar at: <https://bit.ly/360jVEX>

The annual Capitol Hill Day on March 27 is part of NLIHC's Housing Policy Forum 2020: *Ending Homelessness and Housing Poverty*, March 25-27. Learn more and register for the Forum at: <https://www.nlihcforum.org>

NLIHC Housing Leadership Awards

Celebrate Shauna Sorrells at March 26 Housing Leadership Awards Reception

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

The Edward Brooke Housing Leadership Award is named for the late senator from Massachusetts who championed low-income housing as a U.S. senator and as chair of the NLIHC Board of Directors after he left the Senate. The Brooke award goes to an exemplary housing leader with a record of fighting for affordable housing on the national level. NLIHC will posthumously honor **Shauna Sorrells**, former NLIHC board member and chief operating officer at the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, with the Edward Brooke Housing Leadership Award.



Shauna Sorrells

Shauna committed her professional life to public and affordable housing, striving to improve the lives of low-income people, particularly children. In 2002, she began working at HUD and quickly rose to the position of director of the Office of Public Housing Programs. Shauna received several HUD Departmental recognitions, including four Secretarial Awards from Secretaries Jackson, Preston, and Donovan, as well as an Assistant Secretary's Distinguished Service Award. More recently, at the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, Shauna led efforts to address homelessness and housing poverty in Maryland. She was an executive committee member of the NLIHC board of directors, and she served on the board of directors of NAHRO and Homes for America.

The Sheila Crowley Housing Justice Award, named after the former NLIHC president and CEO who led the Coalition for 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).



Jennifer Ho

The third honoree is **Bill Faith**, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) since 1994, who will be bestowed with the 2020 Cushing Dolbeare Award, named after NLIHC's founder and an early affordable housing pioneer. In addition to leading COHHIO, Bill served on the NLIHC board of directors in various forms for 26 years and was the board chair for six years.



Bill Faith

Come celebrate the contributions of Shauna, Jennifer, and Bill 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

New Fact Sheet Available on LGBTQ Equity and Housing

The [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) multi-sector affordable homes campaign recently released a new multi-sector [fact sheet](#) on its website explaining the connections between LGBTQ equity and stable, affordable housing. Research is increasingly clear that stable, affordable, and accessible housing is a critical driver of positive outcomes in many areas of life, but such housing is much less assured for the LGBTQ community.

There are now 13 multi-sector fact sheets on the campaign's website. Each fact sheet compiles landmark research to help policymakers, opinion leaders, and the public understand the deep connections between housing and many other national priorities, from healthcare to education to economic growth. Housing advocates are encouraged to download these fact sheets to help them reach out to potential allies in other fields to make the case for cross-sector collaboration. To broaden the movement for affordable homes, we must ensure that allies in other sectors fully appreciate the extent to which housing influences their own priorities and goals.

The LGBTQ fact sheet is at: <https://tinyurl.com/w2jwvn3>

The full list of fact sheets is at: <https://tinyurl.com/wrpms62>

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](#).

HUD

Federal Register Notice Implements Rural Small PHA Streamlining Provisions

A [Federal Register notice](#) published on February 27 implements Section 209 of the "Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act" (commonly referred to as S. 2155 or "Economic Growth Act"). That act added Section 38 to the "United States Housing Act of 1937" and made several amendments regarding small public housing agencies (PHAs).

Section 38 defines a rural small PHA as one that predominantly operates in a rural area and that administers a combination of 550 or fewer public housing units and/or vouchers under Section 8(o) of the Housing Act. Section 38 also reduced the frequency of inspections for voucher-assisted units to once every three years and provided exemptions from environmental review requirements for development or modernization projects that have a total cost of less than \$100,000.

The *Federal Register* notice is issued by HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH). To avoid confusion with two other small PHA definitions, HUD uses the term "small rural PHAs" when referring to Section 38 small PHAs. The notice refines the definition of a small rural PHA as one that has its primary administrative building in a rural area or that has more than 50% of its combined public housing and voucher units located in a

rural area. The notice clarifies that both Housing Choice Vouchers and Project-Based Vouchers are to be counted.

In response to comments from a *Federal Register* notice published on February 14, 2019 (see [Memo 2/19/2019](#)), the discussion section of the February 27, 2020 *Federal Register* notice also indicates that special purpose vouchers will also count. Special purpose vouchers include Family Unification Program (FUP), Mainstream and Non-Elderly Disabled (NED), and Veterans' Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers. HUD [posted a list](#) of 1,519 PHAs that meet the definition of a small rural PHA as of January 14, 2020.

The Economic Growth Act requires HUD to use the definition of a rural area codified in regulations of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau [12 CFR 1026.35(b)(2)(iv)(A)]. An area is considered rural during a calendar year if it is a county that is neither in a metropolitan statistical area nor in a micropolitan statistical area adjacent to a metropolitan statistical area, or that is a census block not in an urban area as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Economic Growth Act now requires physical inspections at small rural PHAs to take place only every three years. The notice clarifies that interim inspections are still required within 24 hours when a family or government official reports a life-threatening condition or within 15 days if it is not life-threatening. Lead-safety inspections must still be conducted when applicable.

NLIHC sent a [letter to the Senate on December 7, 2017](#) outlining a number of concerns regarding the then-proposed S. 2155. Regarding the proposal to limit inspections to once every three years, NLIHC wrote:

“The bill jeopardizes residents’ housing quality and the public’s investment in public housing by postponing physical inspections for public housing for three years, except if [a PHA is] deemed ‘troubled.’ The condition of units can deteriorate quickly, while households often do not complain about living conditions for fear of retaliation. We believe that small PHAs that classify as substandard should not go longer than two years without a physical inspection, especially since the low PHAS scores received by these PHAs are symptomatic of poor management and inadequate maintenance. Decreasing oversight of substandard small PHAs that ensures they are addressing their deficiencies could lead to those PHAs being classified as troubled shortly thereafter.”

The Economic Growth Act created a new section that exempts small rural PHAs from any environmental review requirements for development or modernization projects that cost no more than \$100,000. That provision is in effect without the need for rulemaking. HUD must still, however, propose rules for projects with total costs greater than \$100,000.

The *Federal Register* notice is at: <https://tinyurl.com/ret4lpm>

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

More about Housing Choice Vouchers is [on page 4-1](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

More about Project-Based Vouchers is on [page 4-7](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

Regarding special purpose vouchers:

More about Family Unification Program (FUP) Vouchers is on [page 4-15](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

More about Mainstream and Non-Elderly Disabled (NED) Vouchers is on [page 4-18](#) of NLIHC’s *2019 Advocates’ Guide*.

Research

Study Evaluates the Use of LIHTC for Disaster Recovery

A study in the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, "[Affordable Housing, Disasters, and Social Equity: LIHTC as a Tool for Preparedness and Recovery](#)," evaluated how states are using the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) for disaster preparedness, hazard mitigation, and recovery efforts. Of the 53 states and territories evaluated, they found only 24 prioritized disaster preparedness and recovery in LIHTC qualified allocation plans (QAPs). States with higher homeownership rates, lower home values, and lower rents were more likely to have disaster-related provisions. The number of federal disaster declarations was only marginally different between states with and without disaster-related provisions in their LIHTC qualified allocation plans.

The authors examined the available 2017 and 2018 QAPs of all states (except Alaska), the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands. LIHTC facilitates the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing by offering federal tax credits to developers of affordable housing. States inform applicants of LIHTC selection state-level criteria and priorities through the QAPs, and then award tax credits through a competitive application process. The authors of the study identified provisions in the QAPs that would encourage developers to make additional efforts related to disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, or recovery. Only 24 states and territories had any disaster-related provisions in their qualified allocation plans.

QAPs were categorized depending on the kinds of provisions included. Mitigation and preparedness provisions encouraged or required developers to site projects in areas less likely to be affected by disasters, or to incorporate design features that would reduce vulnerability. Recovery provisions encouraged the use of LIHTC to rehabilitate or rebuild housing affected by disasters. Eight states had both mitigation and recovery provisions, 13 states had only preparedness provisions, and three had only recovery provisions.

The authors used American Community Survey (ACS), HUD, and FEMA data to compare the characteristics of states with and without disaster-related provisions. They examined homeownership rates, median rents, poverty rate, state median income, and the number of federal disaster declarations in each state, among other features. The analysis showed that states with high homeownership rates, lower median rents, and fewer LIHTC units already in existence per million residents were more likely to include disaster-related provisions in QAPs. States with disaster-related provisions experienced more federal disaster declarations since the LIHTC program was created in 1986, although the differences were not statistically significant. While most states often targeted LIHTC funds for relief following a disaster, having the explicit provisions in the QAP made the distribution more likely.

The researchers also found that, even though states with both mitigation and recovery disaster provisions have had more federally declared disasters, such states received substantially less FEMA housing assistance between 2013 and 2017 than states with no provisions. They call for further research on the interaction of disaster exposure and federal aid.

"Affordable Housing, Disasters, and Social Equity" is available at: <https://bit.ly/2uv14oO>

More information about LIHTC is on [page 5-14](#) of NLIHC's 2019 *Advocates' Guide*.

Research Finds Slow Wage Growth and Rising Inequality

The Economic Policy Institute's annual report, "[State of Working America Wages 2019](#)," examines hourly wage trends over the last 40 years. The report finds that, for most workers, wages have grown in only 10 of the last 40 years, and the highest earners continue to pull away from middle- and low-wage workers. The national median wage is insufficient to afford the average Fair Market Rent for a modest two-bedroom rental apartment. The report asserts that policy interventions can make a difference for the lowest-income households and produce more consistent, equitable growth.

Long-term trends in compensation (wages and benefits) show slow growth for most workers. Wage growth has not kept pace with productivity gains. Since 1979, worker productivity increased by 69.6%, but compensation for production and nonsupervisory workers grew by just 11.6%. Wage growth among workers has been uneven since 1979, with greater gains at the highest end: hourly wages for the lowest 10% of wage earners rose by just 3.3%, the median wage grew 15.1%, and the wages for the top 5% of wage earners grew by 63.2%. Wages were spurred by exceptionally low unemployment in the late 1990s and in the last five years, but throughout the rest of the 40-year period, wages were largely stagnant.

The report also looks at the current wage distribution and wage growth in the last year. In 2019, the median wage was \$19.33 an hour. That is less than the "housing wage" (\$22.96/hour) needed to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent in 2019 (see NLIHC's [Out of Reach](#) report). Wage inequality continued to increase between 2018 and 2019, as the top earners pulled further away from middle- and low-wage workers. In 2000, earners in the top 5% were paid 2.9 times as much as the median worker and 6.0 times as much as earners in the bottom 10%. By 2019, the highest earners were making 3.5 and 6.7 times more, respectively. Despite tighter labor-market conditions, the wages for earners at the 10th percentile fell by 0.7% between 2018 and 2019.

The report offers evidence that earners at the bottom of the wage distribution benefit from increases in the minimum wage. Wage growth at the bottom was faster in the 24 states and the District of Columbia that increased their minimum wage in 2019. Wages at the 10th percentile grew by 4.1% in such states, compared to growth of just 0.9% in states that did not increase the minimum wage. States that have increased the minimum wage at least once since 2013 have seen a 17.6% increase in wages at the 10th percentile since that time, compared to a 9.3% for states that have not.

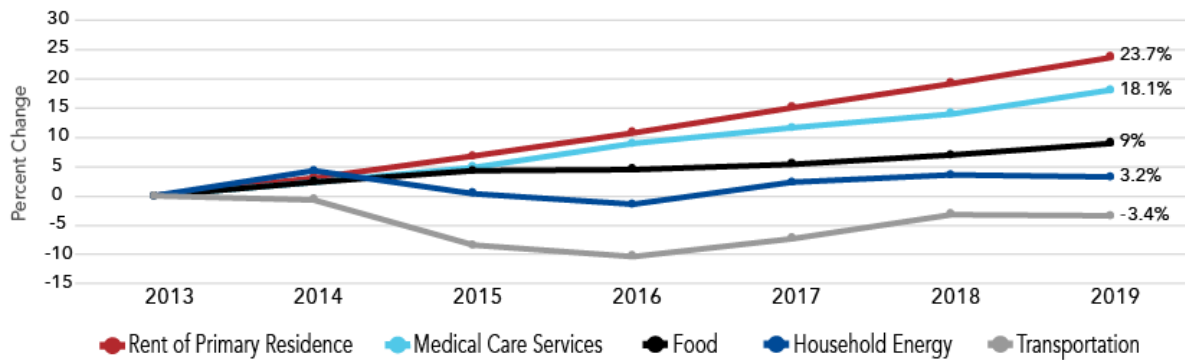
This pattern of slow, uneven, unequal wage growth contributes to the persistent housing affordability crisis, particularly for households with the lowest incomes. Households with extremely low incomes are much more likely to be severely housing cost-burdened. NLIHC's [2020 Policy Priorities](#) include anti-poverty solutions like increasing the federal minimum wage.

The report can be read in full at: <https://bit.ly/2VmWzYs>

Fact of the Week

Rent Cost Increases Since 2013 Outpace Other Basic Household Expenses

Change in Costs for Rent and Other Basic Household Expenses Since 2013



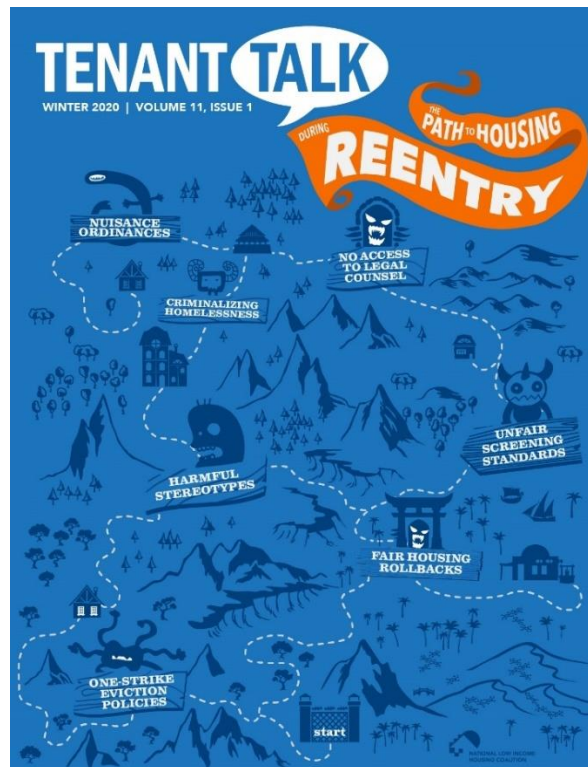
Source: BLS, Consumer Price Index (2020), annual average for all urban consumers in U.S. city average, not seasonally adjusted.
See Joint Center for Housing Studies, *America's Rental Housing 2020*, for discussion of how rents have increased faster than general inflation.

Source: BLS, Consumer Price Index (2020), annual average for all urban consumers in US. City average, not seasonally adjusted.

Resources

Now Available: Winter 2020 Edition of *Tenant Talk: The Path to Housing Reentry*

NLIHC released on February 17 its winter 2020 edition of [Tenant Talk](#), a publication by and for residents of public and assisted housing and those in need of such housing. This edition focuses on “The Path to Housing Reentry,” the obstacles returning prisoners face in securing decent, safe, accessible housing and other housing-criminal justice issues; how those obstacles and issues must be addressed; and what advocates can do.



The U.S. makes up about 5% of the world’s population but has more than 20% of the world’s prison population, and over 6 million Americans are under the correctional supervision of parole or probation. People leaving incarceration face numerous issues when they return to their communities, including discrimination in accessing housing, harmful stereotypes, and unfair housing-applicant screening standards. Other housing-criminal justice issues pertain to nuisance ordinances, one-strike eviction policies, lack of accesses to legal counsel, the criminalization of homelessness, and much more. Learn more about these and other issues - and what advocates can do to combat them - in this edition of *Tenant Talk*.

Tenant Talk: The Path to Housing Reentry is available online at: <https://bit.ly/2VoNiza>

You can also request hard copies of *Tenant Talk* be mailed to you for free at: <https://bit.ly/32BDI36>

“Fair Chance” Ordinances Toolkit Available from National Housing Law Project

The National Housing Law Project (NHLP) released a [“Fair Chance Ordinances: An Advocates’ Toolkit,”](#) providing step-by-step guidance to creating such a local ordinance to provide a “fair chance” to people previously engaged with the criminal justice system. The toolkit includes key elements of a fair chance ordinance, including how to implement and enforce one; legal and practical considerations; and helpful resources such as a chart summarizing existing local fair chance ordinances. NHLP will host a webinar about the toolkit on Tuesday, April 7 at 2:00 pm ET.

More than 600,000 people leave prison each year. Stable, affordable housing is an urgent need and is an essential factor in reducing recidivism. But estimates of the number of people excluded from housing due to an arrest or criminal record are staggering. Organizers and advocates around the country are increasingly pressing local governments to provide access to housing for people with criminal records. The toolkit offers a step-by-step guide to developing local policies that reduce the use of criminal records in the rental housing application process.

The “Fair Chance Ordinances: An Advocates’ Toolkit” is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/r5fnzca>

More information about housing opportunities for people reentering the community after involvement with the criminal justice system is at: <https://tinyurl.com/https-www-nhlp-org-initiativ>

National Housing Week of Action

Advocates Begin Planning for *Our Homes, Our Voices* National Housing Week of Action

Federal investments in proven affordable housing solutions benefit us all, but these investments have not kept pace with the need, and the Trump administration is again proposing big cuts. Advocates from around the country are beginning to plan how they will raise their voices in support of vital affordable housing programs during the fourth annual *Our Homes, Our Voices* National Housing Week of Action taking place May 2 to May 12.

There are many ways for people and organizations to participate in the *Our Homes, Our Voices* Week of Action. Last week, NLIHC held a planning webinar that covered best practices for planning and carrying out a Week of Action event or activity. The webinar also described the resources NLIHC provides to support you in these efforts and shared examples of successful events carried out last year.

NLIHC urges you to submit the events/activities you are planning at: www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org

The PowerPoint and recording of the webinar are at: www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org

Census

NLIHC Urges Advocates to Promote Full Participation in the 2020 Census

A national census is required by the U.S. Constitution once every ten years. A full and accurate 2020 census is critical to ensure that under-represented populations, such as extremely low-income renter households, homeless households, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, and people with disabilities, are counted. NLIHC urges advocates to use materials provided by the [Census Counts](#) campaign, other advocacy organizations, and the U.S. Census Bureau to encourage people to complete 2020 census materials sent to them. *Memo to Members and Partners* will have frequent articles about the 2020 census as the nation approaches Census Day on April 1, 2020.

A full and accurate 2020 census count is important in the context of affordable and accessible housing because census numbers are used to distribute billions of dollars every year related to housing, including Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and other housing assistance programs. In addition, public officials and private developers rely on census data to identify places where the population is growing and new investments in affordable housing are needed. If all of the people in a community, especially those often under-represented in past censuses, are not fully counted in the 2020 census, more people will lack affordable places to live.

A major source of information for a broad range of advocates is [Census Counts](#), a collaborative campaign coordinated by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights ([The Leadership Conference](#)). Census Counts involves [more than 15 national organizations](#) and dozens of community partners in more than 30 states working to ensure the 2020 census is fair and accurate – so that all people, especially those who are often under-represented, have access to the political power they deserve and the resources their communities need. The

campaign works to educate stakeholders and the public about the importance of a fair and accurate census for all people.

Some communities, including people with lower incomes and people of color, have historically been harder to count fully. Therefore, the Census Counts campaign is mobilizing community leaders to do everything they can to prevent people from being missed by the 2020 census. As the Census Counts campaign states, “If we are in the streets, and on the news, and even in the polling booth, but not in the Census, we will find the things that we need are still missing. **This is the time to get involved.** The Census counts. So do you.”

Census data shape the future of communities and can amplify the voices of under-represented people in Congress. States and communities not fully counted could lose political influence and resources. Census data will determine how more than \$800 billion in federal government resources will be distributed each year and where schools, roads, and hospitals are built. Census data will also determine how many congressional seats are apportioned among the states so that there is fair political representation in Congress, and an accurate count will provide fair political representation in state and local legislative bodies as well. A state could lose a member of Congress and a city could lose representation in the state legislature if their populations are not fully counted. Such a loss of political power and resources would last for 10 years, until the next census.

Among other resources on the Census Counts website are materials on its [Impact webpage](#) focusing on issues such as health care, education, transportation, jobs. There is also an extensive array of resources in the Census Counts [library](#).

Census Counts has a simple [#CountMeIn pledge form](#) where individuals can pledge to be counted and to educate their community about the importance of the 2020 census.

From the Field

California Governor Newsom Delivers State-of-the-State Address on Homelessness

California Governor Gavin Newsom delivered his [State-of-the-State address](#) on February 19, focusing on the issue of homelessness. He discussed the housing investments proposed in his 2020-21 budget request released on January 10 and outlined a framework for addressing homelessness in the state. His plans include a coordinated statewide response, emergency actions to reduce street homelessness, increased attention to behavioral health services, stable funding to expand the supply of affordable housing, and more emergency shelters. Governor Newsom emphasized that a comprehensive state response to homelessness requires shared responsibility and accountability by state and local partners.

Governor Newsom’s 2020-21 [budget proposal](#) calls for significant state funding to address homelessness, including a \$750 million initial investment in the California Access to Housing Services Fund. This statewide fund would support the development of affordable homes, supplement and expand rental subsidies, and stabilize boarding and care homes. The budget also includes \$695 million to reform the Medi-Cal system to provide more comprehensive care for individuals experiencing mental illness and homelessness. The administration also proposes reforming the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) to prioritize early intervention for people experiencing mental illness and homelessness or involved in the criminal justice system.

Governor Newsom referenced last year’s legislative session, which included a [robust package of affordable housing bills](#), and discussed the Executive Order ([N-23-20](#)) he issued on January 8. The Executive Order deployed emergency mobile home trailers and services for homeless families and seniors, directed state agencies to evaluate excess land that could be converted into short-term emergency shelters, and established a multiagency “strike team.” In his State-of-the-State address, Governor Newsom announced that 286 state

properties would be made available for local governments to use for homeless shelters. The administration has mandated that shelters built on excess state land must offer services, such as medical care or housing assistance. Leaders in several cities and counties have expressed concerns about the excess land initiative, which would offer state land for free but would not provide the funds needed to operate the shelters.

Governor Newsom emphasized the importance of state collaboration with cities and counties to address the crisis while also holding local governments accountable through comprehensive audits and a “do-it-or-lose-it” policy. He also proposed establishing a statewide homelessness data system, increasing cross-sector collaboration, and expanding the supply of affordable homes.

The governor also reiterated that he would continue to seek to partner with the federal government to address the homelessness crisis in California. In a September 16, 2019, [letter](#) to President Trump, Governor Newsom called on the administration to increase federal investments in housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness and requested 50,000 additional Housing Choice Vouchers and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing vouchers. HUD Secretary Ben Carson rejected the request in a September 18, 2019, [letter](#) in response.

Events

NeighborWorks Training Institute in Los Angeles, May 18-22

Keywords: NeighborWorks Training Institute, NTI

Online [registration](#) is open for the next [NeighborWorks Training Institute](#) (NTI) taking place in Los Angeles, May 18-22. The NTI offers nonprofit professionals courses and certifications in affordable housing development and financing; housing asset management; community engagement; community revitalization; community economic development; housing construction and rehabilitation; financial capability and homeownership education, coaching, and counseling; nonprofit management and leadership; Native American and rural community development; and single-family and small business lending.

In addition providing many classes lasting one to five days each, the NTI will offer a one-day symposium, "[Strengthening Communities: Housing Affordability and Access \(ML935\)](#)," on Wednesday, May 20. The symposium will focus on addressing the myriad challenges related to housing supply.

Register for the NTI at: <https://bit.ly/2vodvTV>

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Week of February 23

The following are some of the news stories that NLIHC contributed to during the week of February 23:

- “Trump’s tax break promised housing opportunity but the ‘forgotten’ are still waiting,” *AL.com*, February 27 at: <https://tinyurl.com/wcw4btm>
- “CBO: Raising the federal minimum wage would lift millions out of poverty — but there's a downside,” *Yahoo! News*, February 26 at: <https://tinyurl.com/whtuq44>
- “Robert Gehrke: The most important bill the Legislature will consider this year might not get any money,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, February 26 at: <https://tinyurl.com/rb3kwqn>

- “Low-income renters are struggling. Here’s how Democrats plan to help them.” *Curbed*, February 25 at: <https://tinyurl.com/sgr258o>
- “High housing costs deny many a home,” *The Charlotte Observer*, February 24 at: <https://tinyurl.com/uu6dm72>
- “Rapidly Rising Rent Causing Homelessness In Arizona,” *Medium*, February 21 at: <https://tinyurl.com/qkm2oe2>

NLIHC News

Where to Find Us – March 2

Keywords: Diane Yentel, NLIHC staff, speaking

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

- [American Legion’s 60th Annual Washington Conference](#), Washington, DC, March 9
- [New York Housing Conference Thought-Leaders Event](#), New York, NY, March 12
- [Making Change Happen: Effective Advocacy for Affordable Housing](#), La Vista, NE, March 16
- [Resilient Nation Partnership Network: Alliances for Equity: Addressing Social Vulnerability](#), Silver Spring, MD, March 19
- [West Virginia Coalition to End Homelessness Annual Conference on Ending Homelessness](#), Davis, WV, April 1
- [Panel at George Mason University for Nonprofit Studies class](#), Fairfax, VA, April 2
- [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
- [National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies Annual Conference](#), New York, NY, May 7
- [Princeton Community Housing Annual Homes Build Opportunity Gala](#), Princeton, NJ, June 13
- [HousingWorks RI Annual Factbook Lunch](#), Providence, RI, October 16
- [Maine Affordable Housing Coalition Conference](#), Portland, ME, November 18

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