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Fight for Housing Justice

Fight for Housing Justice Campaign Week of Action Starts Today!

March 16 is the deadline to submit comments opposing HUD Secretary Carson's proposed changes to the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule. HUD's proposal signals this administration's retreat from national efforts to overcome pervasive racial segregation, much of which is the result of federal policies in past decades. Join NLIHC, the National Housing Law Project, the National Fair Housing Alliance, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and many others for a [Week of Action](#) starting today, March 9, and running through March 13. Rally with advocates in a series of events and activities to encourage organizations and individuals to submit unique comments opposing the new rule before the March 16 deadline.

More than 14,400 comments have been submitted so far in response to the Trump administration's proposed changes to the rule. Help keep this momentum going and let's double the number of comments submitted by March 16. Use the resources available through the [Fight for Housing Justice](#) campaign to draft unique comments opposing this proposal. (It is very important that comments are unique.) Participate in scheduled events hosted by national and local groups such as a [comment party](#), Facebook Live events, and a tweetstorm. Or host your own activity. Tips and ideas for events/activities are available at:

<https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-woa>

Mark your calendar for a national #KeepHousingFair tweetstorm on March 13, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. ET. This is the last weekday before the March 16 comment deadline. Let's be sure to use this last opportunity to elevate the conversation on Twitter. Sample tweets are below. Sample graphics can be downloaded at:

<https://tinyurl.com/vq5fn2o> and <https://tinyurl.com/qw5ndtu>

- Where you live determines how you live. Everyone deserves access to safe & #affordablehousing near quality schools, transportation & jobs. Fight back against @HUDGov's latest attack on the right of every person to an affordable home in a healthy community <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- Do you want to see the Trump administration successfully gut fair housing protections for millions of people? If not, join the fight to #KeepHousingFair. Submit a comment opposing changes that would weaken the existing #AFFH rule <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- Why do we need a strong #AFFH? It's meant to end discriminatory housing practices & overcome the impacts of government-sponsored residential segregation that weaken our communities & undermine our prosperity. #KeepHousingFair Comment today <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- We need to take a stand against @HUDgov's attempt to weaken fair housing rights & to let communities receive HUD funds while they perpetuate housing discrimination & segregation. HUD's accepting comments now – send yours today <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affhcomment> #KeepHousingFair
- @HUDgov is accepting comments on its proposed #AFFH rule that would eliminate anti-segregation protections. Now is the time to make your voice heard and join the campaign to #KeepHousingFair <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- #ALERT: @HUDgov proposes rule that would weaken #AFFH, a legal mandate for ensuring communities address systemic discrimination & segregation. Fight back to #KeepHousingFair <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- We're joining a coalition of advocates to #KeepHousingFair and fight the Trump administration's latest attack on key fair housing rights. Join us by commenting today <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>

- ALERT: @HUDgov has launched another attack on fair housing, announcing a rule that would allow communities to receive @HUDgov funding while perpetuating housing discrimination & segregation. This isn't right! #KeepHousingFair by submitting a comment today <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- Help protect our neighborhoods from discrimination! Everyone should have a place to call home that connects them to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. #KeepHousingFair Submit a comment today <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- .@HUDgov's new proposed #AFFH rule would rollback desegregation efforts. It takes away the tools communities need to identify and eliminate housing discrimination. It would PERPETUATE discrimination & segregation. Fight back <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- March 16 is the deadline to tell @HUDGov to #KeepHousingFair! Submit a comment to oppose its efforts to gut the #AFFH rule and tell @SecretaryCarson you will not stand for housing discrimination <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- It's not too late to fight for your housing rights and protect our ability to combat decades of policies that continue segregation and discrimination. March 16 is the deadline to submit your comment to @HUDGov and help us #KeepHousingFair <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- March 16 is fast approaching! Time is running out to submit public comments to @HUDgov opposing its attack on the #AFFH rule. Don't miss your opportunity to #KeepHousingFair and comment TODAY <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>
- #ICYMI The Trump administration is attacking your fair housing rights — and March 16 is the deadline to fight back. Protect the #AFFH rule and #KeepHousingFair submit your comments today <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>

More information on the scheduled national events can be found at:

<https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-woa>

Comment templates and sample letters, fact sheets, news, and additional resources are at:

www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh

You can also submit comments at: <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh-comment>

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 jurisdictions must follow until a final rule is passed is on pages [7-14](#), [7-21](#), and [7-26](#) of NLIHC's *2019 Advocates' Guide*.

HUD

HUD to Offer Webinar on Infectious Disease Preparedness for Homeless Assistance Providers and Partners, March 10

HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) will conduct a [webinar](#), "Infectious Disease Preparedness for Homeless Assistance Providers and Their Partners," on Tuesday, March 10 at 3:00 p.m. ET. SNAPS Director Norm Suchar will facilitate a panel of experts who will provide the most up-to-date information and identify resources to support local response efforts.

The recent emergence of coronavirus (COVID-19) calls for enhanced cooperation between public health authorities, homeless service systems, and other partners at the local level. To support these partnerships and the

vulnerable households served, relevant federal agencies are issuing guidance from subject-matter experts on lessons learned from previous infectious disease response efforts.

Individuals experiencing chronic homelessness have an increased likelihood of chronic medical conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, and hypertension) as well as coinciding mental health diagnosis and/or history of substance use.

During crisis situations, health conditions can be exacerbated if health care regimes are not maintained or histories of trauma trigger high-risk behaviors. These factors may increase individuals' risk of infection and should be accounted for in response planning. Local partners also need to consider how congregate programs (i.e. nursing homes and homeless shelters) can limit risks to their clients, staff, and volunteers. In the meantime, shelter providers should consult with their local health department before turning away individuals with respiratory symptoms. If an individual requires medical attention, continue to direct them to a healthcare provider.

Webinar panelists are:

- Jay Butler, MD, deputy director infectious disease, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Barbara DiPietro, PhD, senior director of policy, National Health Care for the Homeless Council
- Hedda McLendon, manager, housing service and stability, King County Department of Community and Human Services
- Melisa Grogan, senior program specialist, SNAPS

Join the webinar at <https://adobe.ly/2POjx7a>

You do not need to register in advance.

However, if you have never attended an Adobe Connect meeting before, you should:

1. [Test your connection](#)
2. [Learn more about Adobe Connect](#)

Other Key Resources:

- [CDC: Information on Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).
- [National HCH Council updates and resources](#) influenza webpage.
- [Disease Risks and Homelessness](#) page on the HUD Exchange will have the latest information and policy guidance.

SNAPS will disseminate information via the Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) listservs as it becomes available. We encourage all interested parties to [subscribe to the HUD Exchange Mailing List to get regular updates from HUD](#).

HUD is available to provide technical assistance to homeless assistance providers who need support in preventing or responding to the spread of infectious diseases. Submit questions to the [Ask A Question \(AAQ\) portal](#). In Step 2 of the question submission process, select "CoC: Continuum of Care Program" from the "My question is related to" drop down list and write "Health Preparedness and Response" in the subject line.

HUD Awards \$5 Million to Public Housing Agencies to Install Carbon Monoxide Detectors

HUD awarded \$5 million to public housing agencies (PHAs) to purchase and install carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in public housing units, the first time it has done so. The source is HUD's [Capital Fund Emergency/Natural Disaster program](#). Each year, Congress sets aside funds within the public housing Capital Fund appropriation as a reserve for emergencies and non-presidentially declared natural disasters. HUD has \$20 million available for FY20.

A HUD [media release](#) lists the PHAs receiving these resources.

HUD announced its intention to make CO detectors mandatory in federally assisted housing where there are combustion-based appliances and/or an attached garage. HUD sent a notice to all PHAs and private owners of HUD-subsidized housing reminding and encouraging them to install CO detectors in their properties if not already required by state and local law (see *Memo*, [4/22/19](#)).

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

Congress

House Passes the “Yes in My Backyard Act”

The House of Representatives passed by voice vote the “Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) Act” ([H.R. 4351](#)) on March 2. NLIHC supports this bill. The bill aims to encourage affordable housing development in more communities and to increase transparency by requiring Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant-receiving jurisdictions to explain why they do not implement inclusive zoning practices that can help increase housing opportunities for low- and middle-income residents.

Introduced by Representatives Denny Heck (D-WA) and Trey Hollingsworth (R-IN), the bill would encourage CDBG grantees to implement anti-discriminatory land-use policies to facilitate creation of new affordable housing in more communities. The list of more than 20 policies includes: rezoning areas for high-density housing, encouraging mixed-use development and transit-oriented development, reducing minimum-lot-size requirements, allowing accessory dwellings, and ensuring historic preservation requirements encourage construction of housing in historic buildings and districts, among others. The bill would require CDBG grantees to submit a report every five years stating: 1) whether they have implemented anti-discriminatory land-use policies, 2) whether they plan to implement such policies, or 3) the reasons they have not adopted such policies. These reports would have no impact on the amount of money grantees receive.

The “YIMBY Act” currently has 13 bipartisan co-sponsors. A Senate companion bill ([S.1919](#)) was introduced by Senator Todd Young (R-IN) in June 2019 (see *Memo*, [7/01/19](#)).

More information about the bill is at: <https://bit.ly/2PMgrke>

Representative Heck's press release about the bill is at: <https://bit.ly/3cviAKX>

House Subcommittee Questions HUD Secretary Carson on FY21 Budget Request and More

The House Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations held a [hearing](#) on March 4 about the HUD budget request for FY21. Members of the subcommittee asked HUD Secretary Ben Carson, the sole witness, a number of

questions about the president's budget request, regulatory proposals, and other concerns about specific programs.

The president's FY21 budget request proposed cutting HUD funding by \$8.6 billion (15%) compared to FY20 congressionally enacted levels. Secretary Carson stated that the requested cuts and eliminations of programs are to reduce the national deficit. He acknowledged that several of the programs the budget proposed eliminating, such as CDBG and HOME, are great models but suggested state and local governments should be providing these resources, not the federal government. During their opening remarks, both Chair David Price (D-NC) and Ranking Member Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) noted the budget request did include increased funds for Section 202 Housing for the Elderly, Section 811 Housing for People with Disabilities, and the Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control program.

Several representatives, including Chair Price and Representatives Katherine Clark (D-MA) and Pete Aguilar (D-CA), noted the proposed budget cut funding for homelessness assistance grants despite the administration's rhetoric about addressing increased homelessness in certain parts of the country. Secretary Carson pushed back stating that the budget proposal requested a higher amount, although it was unclear if he was making a comparison to the FY20 budget request or the FY20 enacted level (which is [\\$4 million above](#) the president's FY21 budget request). Representative Clark noted that the administration's proposal excluded an important set-aside in homeless assistance grants for survivors of domestic violence; Secretary Carson claimed this need was addressed in a different way in the budget.

Representative John Rutherford (R-FL) said that several organizations serving people experiencing homelessness in his district had not received funding. As later pointed out by Chair Price, Representative Rutherford was asking about FY19 funds, but Secretary Carson took the opportunity to complain that Congress had prevented him from making changes to the criteria for Continuum of Care funding. In the [FY20 HUD spending bill](#) Congress sent a bipartisan, bicameral sign of support for the Housing First model, which Secretary Carson tried to undermine in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the FY19 funds that Representative Rutherford asked about. Secretary Carson expressed his continued desire to move away from the Housing First model, stating that he is "looking for ways to work around the system." Representative Aguilar pressed the secretary on this statement, telling him that a policy directive from Congress is not a suggestion and should not be ignored. Secretary Carson maintained his stance that Housing First is ineffective, despite decades of research showing its successes.

Several members of the committee also questioned Secretary Carson about recent regulatory proposals, including the mixed-status immigrant family rule, changes to the Disparate Impact and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rules, and the lack of any guidance on protecting LBGTQ people experiencing homelessness. Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ) condemned HUD's proposed AFFH rule, stating that the new definition of AFFH "no longer includes both desegregation and community investment" and focuses instead on the supply of housing. When pushed, Secretary Carson could not explain how the rule would encourage any affirmative action to advance housing choice, particularly from jurisdictions that have ignored that responsibility. Instead the secretary called his proposed rule a "bottom up" approach. The AFFH proposed rule is open for public comment through March 16 (visit <https://www.fightforhousingjustice.org/affh> to comment and learn more). Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) also confronted Secretary Carson about his decision to remove guidance from HUD's website about implementing the Equal Access Rule, which provides critical protections for trans individuals seeking emergency shelter, without providing any new guidance. The secretary responded that the agency is working on the rule and that he believes "everyone gets equal rights, but nobody gets extra rights." Trans people, particularly trans people of color, experience much higher rates of homelessness than the broader population.

Members of the committee asked about a number of other issues, including the need for public housing funding, the new Federal Financial Monitor for disaster recovery funds in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and low morale among HUD staff.

A recording of the hearing is at: <https://tinyurl.com/t4k7h3u>

Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020

***New York Times* Features 2020 Candidates' Housing Proposals**

Voters care deeply about solutions to the affordable housing and homelessness crisis in America. National media outlets are shining a spotlight on what 2020 presidential candidates have proposed to do to address the crisis. *The New York Times* released an article on March 3 that compares the candidates' affordable housing plans. The article, "[How the Democratic Candidates Would Tackle the Housing Crisis](#)," is one of a series that profile the candidates' stances on issues of importance to voters.

NLIHC president and CEO Diane Yentel is quoted in the article remarking on this unique moment for the movement for affordable, accessible homes: "To the extent that housing has ever been talked about in previous presidential campaigns, it's almost always been related to middle-class homeownership. This time, it's almost entirely about the housing needs for the lowest-income renters and people experiencing homelessness, where the solutions are most needed." The article goes on to describe and contrast the candidates' proposals.

Over the past few weeks the field of 2020 presidential candidates has winnowed dramatically. But across the whole field, affordable housing and homelessness broke through as a major election issue that candidates felt the need to address. All major candidates released plans to combat the affordable housing crisis—a groundbreaking development for the affordable housing movement.

[Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020](#), NLIHC's non-partisan candidate and voter engagement project, has tracked what all the candidates have proposed regarding affordable housing and homelessness. To learn more about a candidate's plans, check out the candidate pages.

"Getting Candidates on the Record" about Their Affordable Housing Solutions: Learn How on March 19 Webinar!

Join NLIHC for a webinar on "**Getting Candidates on the Record**" about their affordable housing solutions on March 19 at 3:00 p.m. ET. Register for this webinar 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>

This session will provide an exploration of the most common methods to get candidates for elected office on the record with their ideas for affordable housing solutions. The presenters will discuss the use of candidate questionnaires and legal considerations about using them, along with tips on maximizing response rates from candidates. The session will also explore the use of effective candidate intercepts and asking questions in town hall meetings, as well as effective use of question cards and training volunteers to attend candidate events. The discussion will feature ideas for social media engagement and conventional media op-eds and letters to the editor as ways to urge candidates to go on the record.

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 (Watch recording at: <https://bit.ly/338Ydho>)
- **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>

NLIHC Housing Policy Forum 2020

“Zoning Reform, Civil Rights, and Housing Justice” to be 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 dozens of sessions with compelling speakers, and panelists. One will be on “**Zoning Reform, Civil Rights, and Housing Justice: Confronting Barriers to Development.**”

Communities throughout the U.S. have long used zoning codes to institute and perpetuate housing discrimination. Zoning and local approval processes also contribute to the lack of affordable rental housing by creating barriers to development of new homes, leading to rapid rent escalation. New state and local policy

solutions are taking root. Zoning reform is increasingly seen as an important part of civil rights and affordability, with communities looking toward up-zoning, Yes-In-My-Back-Yard policies, and in some cases lawsuits against cities with restrictive zoning codes. Learn more about all of these and more at a session on “Zoning Reform, Civil Rights and Housing Justice” at the NLIHC Policy Forum. Speakers for this session are:



Jesse Kanson-Benanav, senior project manager, B’Nia B’rith Housing, and founder/organizer, ABC Cambridge



Allan Lazo, executive director, Fair Housing Council of Oregon



Michael Stegman, senior research fellow, Center for Household Financial Stability, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis



Moderator: Anne Mavity, executive director, Minnesota Housing Partnership

Other confirmed and invited speakers at the Forum 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)

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 today!](#)

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.

NLIHC Housing Leadership Awards

Join NLIHC at March 26 Reception Honoring Housing Leaders Jennifer Ho, Bill Faith, and Shauna Sorrells!

Register to attend [NLIHC's 38th Annual Housing Leadership Awards Reception](#) to celebrate the 2020 Housing Leadership Award Honorees **Jennifer Leimaile Ho, Bill Faith** and **Shauna Sorrells**. The reception will take at 6:00 pm ET on March 26, 2020 at the Washington Court Hotel in Washington, DC. You may also make a contribution in their honor [here](#).



The Sheila Crowley Housing Justice Award is named after former NLIHC President and CEO Sheila Crowley, who led NLIHC for more than 17 years. **Jennifer Ho**, commissioner of Minnesota Housing and former senior advisor at HUD and deputy director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), 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 Dolbeare Lifetime Service Award, named for NLIHC's founder Cushing Niles Dolbeare, a pioneer of the modern 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 third 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.



Shawna Sorrells

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 Podcast Episode on Latino Rental Housing Affordability

The [*Opportunity Starts at Home*](#) multisector affordable homes campaign released its latest podcast episode, "Latino Rental Housing Affordability," featuring Agatha So, senior policy analyst at [UnidosUS](#). UnidosUS, formerly the National Council of La Raza, is the nation's largest Latino nonprofit advocacy and services organization and is a [Steering Committee](#) member of the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign.

Ms. So discusses recent findings from a UnidosUS [report](#) that interviewed Latino renter households in New York City, Washington DC, San Francisco, Phoenix, Denver, Orlando, and Las Vegas. The findings demonstrate the housing crisis is felt deeply by the Latino community. Ms. So also discusses the history of housing discrimination in the U.S. that shapes the landscape today, as well as concrete policy actions that should be taken to address the problem.

"Action is urgently needed," states Ms. So. "The lack of affordable rental housing has a significant impact on a family's economic security, feelings of safety in their neighborhood, their housing options, and their prospects of saving for the future."

Listen to the full episode [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

Disaster Recovery Research Consortium Holds Meetings with Congressional Offices and HUD

The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Research Consortium convened in Washington, DC on March 2-3 and met with congressional offices and officials from HUD about data and research priorities for equitable disaster housing recovery. They also engaged in a day-long series of discussions about current research projects and future needs and opportunities.

The group consists of researchers and practitioners from academic, research, and non-profit housing organizations engaged in housing recovery after disasters. The Consortium's goals include improving access to quality data on disaster recovery, identifying a research agenda on which to build collaborations, and developing a stronger network of researchers interested in housing, recovery, and resilience. The Consortium includes members from NLIHC, Texas A & M, Texas Housers, The Data Center, University of Florida, Florida Housing Coalition, Fair Share Housing Center, University of Kansas, University of Illinois, University of Central Florida, Enterprise Community Partners, and University of Colorado Denver, among others.

The group met with officials from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research to discuss the department's disaster-related research and with staff of the congressional committees that oversee FEMA – the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure - to encourage legislative solutions to the lack of data transparency at FEMA. Both researchers and advocates have struggled to obtain consistent, quality data on disaster recovery to help them track equitable recovery and understand best practices.

The Research Consortium members met for a day among themselves to exchange information of shared interest and concern and to discuss the efforts of a sub-Consortium working group formed to create a community-focused data portal to address the lack of local, regional, and national data for local recovery and resilience. The working group is exploring the creation of a pilot data portal focusing on the Florida panhandle, a region hit hard by Hurricane Michael and at high risk for future disasters. Another Consortium sub-group is looking into applying for a grant to the National Science Foundation to create a Research Coordinating Network to study the intersections of housing for vulnerable populations and disaster recovery.

Additional Disaster Housing Recovery Updates - March 9, 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 [3/02](#)).

Federal Action and National News

The president mentioned disaster response during remarks at the [National Association of Counties' Legislative Conference](#). He touted what he called a quick federal funding response saying, "I think everybody in this room would say that you get the money much quicker under our administration than in the past" and spoke on the importance of debris removal.

The bipartisan "Preventing Disaster Revictimization Act" ([H.R. 5953](#)) was approved by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and is ready to be considered for a vote by the full House. This bill would prevent FEMA from attempting to recoup disaster recovery funds from disaster survivors.

An article in [Counterpunch](#) lays out deficiencies in FEMA's disaster response and questions whether the agency is prepared to deal with the effects of climate change.

[US Wireless companies](#) are exploring ways to streamline information-sharing between operators and utility companies after disasters – improving access to cell phone signals after disasters.

Tennessee Tornadoes

Nashville and middle Tennessee were struck by multiple [tornadoes](#) on March 3. At least 24 people across the region were killed by the storm with dozens more missing. At least 48 buildings collapsed in Nashville alone.

New York Storms

Representatives Elise Stefanix (R-NY) and Anthony Brindisi (D-NY) [expressed](#) gratitude for federal assistance provided to their region following extreme storms that occurred this past Halloween but also expressed frustration at FEMA's decision to deny their request for emergency funding.

Midwest Flooding

Nebraska officials spoke on a [panel](#) to discuss lessons from 2019's flooding and ongoing efforts to mitigate against future flooding.

In an [editorial](#), the *Omaha World-Herald* called on Congress to pass legislation to reimburse local authorities performing levee repairs and other flood-related relief work.

Puerto Rico

Individuals who lost their jobs due to the recent Puerto Rico earthquakes have until April 2 to file for disaster unemployment benefits from FEMA. FEMA granted a [deadline extension](#) to this date.

Puerto Rico Governor Wanda Vázquez said that increased and improved communication has allowed Puerto Rico to "[gain access](#)" to FEMA funds to implement recovery efforts. The funds in question had been delayed for nearly two years before being released last month with strong restrictions.

Special Representative for Puerto Rico's Disaster Recovery Rear Admiral Peter J. Brown stated that federally funded projects for Puerto Rico have sped up but there are still concerns about [long term efforts](#). "Continuity is vital" regarding recovery efforts on the island.

A [blog post](#) from the *Scientific American* covers the “unnatural disaster” that is the slow response to the earthquakes in Puerto Rico in January.

Hurricane Harvey

Texas

A University of Colorado study [tested](#) for inequalities in access to FEMA grants in Houston after Hurricane Harvey. They found unequal access to federal disaster assistance and loans for lower-income residents and a significant increase in their bankruptcy rates.

Hurricane Matthew and Hurricane Florence

North Carolina

The Pembroke Town Council [rejected](#) a rezoning request from the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina that would have cleared the way for construction of quality mobile homes for homeless veterans. Officials say the rejection stems from the potential for spot-zoning and issues with future developers wanting to open mobile home parks.

North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper declared March 1 to 7 “Severe Weather Preparedness Week” in the state. He [urged](#) North Carolinians to prepare and practice safety plans in case severe weather strikes.

California Wildfires

Most of Butte County’s Native tribes are aiming to leverage their status as sovereign nations into [contracts](#) related to clean-up efforts in the area. They want the state to create a 20% carve-out for local and tribal workers and will continue to advocate for it until it happens.

A group at California State University-Chico has formed to facilitate conversations about [disaster recovery](#). Many students were affected by the Camp Fire in nearby Paradise, CA. Students are working to come up with ethical guidelines for working in post-trauma conditions.

Hurricanes Michael and Irma

Florida

FEMA [announced](#) a six-month extension of its temporary housing program through October 11 in Bay, Calhoun, Gadsden, Gulf and Jackson counties of Florida.

Lawtey City has no funds set aside for natural disasters but proposes uses state funds as well as their recently [approved grant](#) from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to fix lingering water drainage problems resulting from Hurricane Irma.

Research

Study Finds Federally Assisted Renter Households Live in Neighborhoods with Fewer Close, Available Jobs

A paper published by the Urban Institute, “[Spatial Mismatch and Federally Supported Rental Housing](#),” found that assisted households had substantially lower access to jobs within a standard commuting distance than did extremely low-income unassisted rental households. The study included households living in public housing,

those receiving project-based rental assistance, and those using Housing Choice Vouchers. These federally assisted rental households had, on average, 6,032 more job seekers than available jobs within a 6.3-mile radius. In contrast, unassisted extremely low-income households had 3,056 more job seekers than available jobs within a 6.3-mile radius.

The authors analyzed 16 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) for spatial mismatch between the availability of lower-wage jobs and the location of subsidized housing in 2015. The authors used HUD’s Picture of Subsidized Households (POSH) for 2015 to determine the number of assisted households within each census tract, including households in public housing, project-based Section 8 rental assistance, moderate rehabilitation, supportive-housing programs, below-market interest-rate programs, and those receiving Housing Choice Vouchers. They used the 2013-2017 American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates to calculate the number of extremely low-income households eligible for assistance in neighborhoods within those MSAs. They counted a household as eligible for assistance if its income was less than 30% of the area median income for a household of four people. The difference between the ACS estimate of extremely low-income households and the POSH counts of assisted households provided an estimate of the number of unassisted extremely low-income households. Finally, Snagajob, the largest online marketplace for hourly jobs, provided the authors with data about job listings and the number of job applicants in 2015 at the zip code level. Most of those job listings were for full-time positions and many were minimum-wage positions. As of 2017, Snagajob listings accounted for 13% of all new hires in the 16 MSAs.

In order to assess spatial mismatch, the authors counted the number of jobs available within a 6.3 mile radius of each zip code and compared those job listings with estimates of the number of assisted and unassisted extremely low-income households in each area. (They chose 6.3 miles as a reasonable commuting distance because it was the average distance between job applicants’ homes and the workplaces to which they applied on Snagajob.) The authors found that the average spatial mismatch for assisted households was significantly worse than the mismatch for unassisted extremely low-income households. The average assisted household lived in a neighborhood with 6,032 more job seekers than job postings within 6.3 miles while the average unassisted household with an extremely low income lived in a neighborhood with 3,056 more job seekers than jobs within 6.3 miles. Among residents of public housing, the ratio is even worse—they lived in neighborhoods with over 8,000 more job seekers than jobs within 6.3 miles.

The authors also describe variation among the 16 MSAs. In Boston, Minneapolis, Nashville, and Seattle, assisted households lived in close proximity to more jobs than unassisted households with extremely low incomes. Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC and have a much larger spatial mismatch for assisted households. The report provides closer analyses of the spatial mismatch in Atlanta, Chicago, Seattle, and Washington, DC.

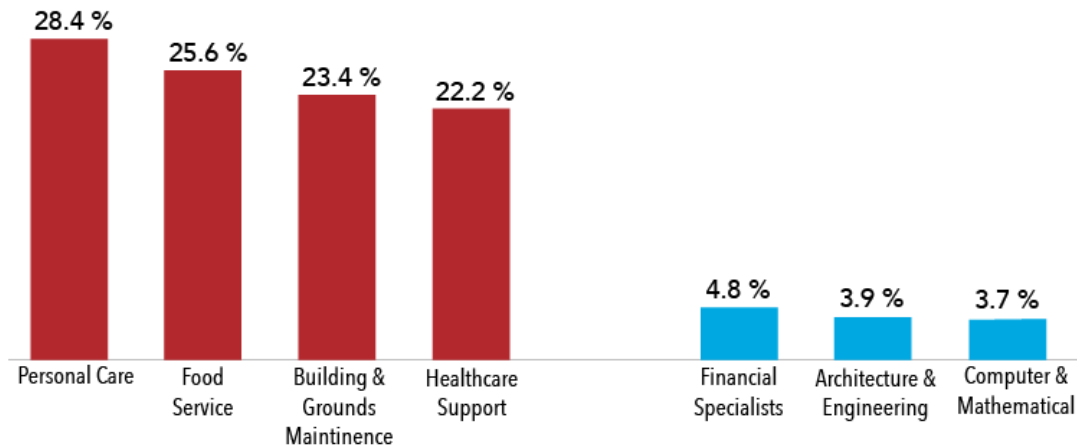
The authors conclude that many federally assisted low-income households may not have the flexibility to live in or move to close-proximity to jobs. The report’s findings could be read alongside another recent study, “Does Jobs Proximity Matter in the Housing Choice Voucher Program?” (see *Memo*, [11/18/19](#)), which found that employed recipients of vouchers were not more likely to reside closer to jobs, and that a greater density of jobs in close proximity was not correlated with greater earnings for households. Taken together, these results emphasize a greater need for research into potential causal relationships between subsidized housing and access to jobs.

The Urban Institute report is at: <https://urbn.is/32NE40U>

Fact of the Week

Highest and Lowest Shares of Housing Cost-Burdened Renter Households by Occupation: Dramatically Higher for Low-Wage Occupations

Share of Renter Households that are Severely Housing Cost-Burdened, By Occupation



Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies, America's Rental Housing (2020). Tabulations from 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies, America's Rental Housing (2020). Tabulations from 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

Resources

Policy Surveillance Program's Fair Housing and Nuisance Ordinance Data

The [Policy Surveillance Program](#) at Temple University's Center for Public Health Law Research updated two datasets, one on state fair housing protections and another on city nuisance property ordinances. The [state fair housing protections dataset](#) identifies key features of state fair housing laws in effect from August 2017 to August 2019. The [city nuisance property ordinances dataset](#) identifies key features of nuisance ordinances in the 40 most populous cities during the same time period. The datasets are displayed on interactive maps that allow users to compare laws across the country and to filter for specific protections. For instance, users can see which states had source-of-income nondiscrimination laws and which states had laws imposing a duty to affirmatively further fair housing.

The Policy Surveillance Program currently offers [88 datasets](#) on a variety of topics connected to public health laws and policies, including five related to housing. Users can also find data on local inclusionary zoning laws, local just-cause eviction and retaliation laws, and state landlord-tenant laws. The data are collected through systematic scans of state and local laws.

The state fair housing protections map can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/2vvc46m>

The city nuisance property ordinances map can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/2TC3Xg9>

Census

The Importance of the 2020 Census for People Experiencing Homelessness

People experiencing homelessness are among the populations deemed “hard to count” by census officials, putting them at a higher risk of not being fully counted in the 2020 Census. The needs of this diverse population and the communities where they live may not be represented or prioritized according to their real share of the population.

Being hard to count can lead to being denied a full voice in policy decision-making. Undercounting people experiencing homelessness in the 2020 Census could also impact how federal funding is allocated to states and localities. Many programs benefiting people experiencing homelessness are funded based in whole or in part on census-derived data. It is therefore important to inform people experiencing homelessness and those who provide them services about the census so that they can be included on the census form for each household.

People experiencing homelessness are difficult to count for a variety of reasons. One is that they are often temporarily doubled-up with family or friends. It is important to inform those who are homeless and those offering people experiencing homelessness a place to stay that *everyone* should be included on the census form for that household. The person filling out the census form for the household should include all people living in the household on April 1, 2020, even if some of the people are not always part of that household, no matter how long they have been staying in the home.

The Census Bureau has a “probe question” on the census form to prompt the person completing the form to include all of the appropriate people in the count. The 2020 Census form will specifically ask about people staying at residences temporarily to prompt respondents to include them. That probe question is illustrated on [a resource](#) provided by the Economic Security and Opportunity Initiative at the Georgetown Law School’s Center on Poverty and Inequality.

Another reason people experiencing homelessness are difficult to count is that many are living in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, safe havens, tent cities, cars, abandoned buildings, and on the street. In localities with ordinances prohibiting panhandling or sleeping on the street, people might seek out inconspicuous locations to take shelter, or they might fear census-takers could report them to law enforcement.

People experiencing homelessness may also be concerned their census responses will adversely affect their access to public benefits. For example, people living with friends or family in violation of public housing rules might fear the Census Bureau will share answers with a public housing agency, which could result in eviction. In fact, such data-sharing is unlawful.

The Census Bureau will use its Service Based Enumeration (SBE) operation to count people who are experiencing homelessness based on the services they use such as shelters, soup kitchens, and regularly scheduled mobile food vans and by visiting certain targeted outdoor locations. The SBE operation will run for three days, March 30 to April 1. Service providers may choose the day or night for SBE visits, while non-sheltered outdoor locations identified in advance will be counted on April 1. Census Bureau officials will rely on input from local authorities and community-based organizations to ensure everyone is counted using this method. SBE census takers will conduct in-person interviews with individuals using paper census forms.

The Census Bureau will also count people experiencing homelessness through the Enumeration at Transitory Locations (ETL) operation, which counts people in transitory locations who do not have a stable home

elsewhere; such locations include hotels, motels, and campgrounds. The ETL operation will take place from April 9 to May 4.

The Economic Security and Opportunity Initiative and the 2020 Census at Georgetown Law School's Center on Poverty and Inequality has many resources about the 2020 Census and various hard-to-count populations at: <https://bit.ly/2VJpZA9>

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights has a 2020 Census webpage at: www.civilrights.org/census

The Leadership Conference also has a special [Census Counts](#) webpage with fact sheets, webinars, and other materials about the 2020 Census, including a fact sheet "[Will You Count? People Experiencing Homelessness in the 2020 Census.](#)"

From the Field

Virginia House of Delegates Passes Bill to Prohibit Landlords from Refusing Housing Choice Vouchers

The Virginia House of Delegates passed House Bill 6 (HB 6) on March 4, advancing fair housing protections for renters who use Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV). The bill would add discrimination on the basis of a person's source of funds to the list of unlawful discriminatory housing practices. Although HB 6 covers all sources of income, the impetus for introducing the bill was to prevent landlords from rejecting applicants who use housing vouchers. The bill applies to prospective renters and homeowners. Delegate Jeff Bourne (D) authored and introduced the bill, which passed the House 57-38 with modest bi-partisan support. It passed the Senate on March 3 by a vote of 25-15.

Numerous advocates and organizations throughout Virginia were essential in achieving this victory, including Virginia Housing Alliance, an NLIHC state partner, Northern Virginia Housing Alliance, an NLIHC member, and Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME) of Virginia.

Delegate Bourne, who is a landlord, noted that he has heard troubling stereotypes from other landlords regarding HCV households that cause landlords to refuse to accept HCVs, limiting options for residents who are searching for places to live. Consequently, families with HCVs often have to use their vouchers in high-poverty, low-opportunity neighborhoods, further hindering their chances for success. The bill would increase access to safe, accessible, affordable housing for low-income renters in Virginia who previously may have been denied a lease.

Striving for even more progress on fair housing, Delegate Bourne is also sponsoring a bill that would ban officials from discriminating against affordable housing projects by enacting restrictive zoning and permitting policies. While these types of bills failed in last year's GOP-controlled General Assembly, Mr. Bourne is optimistic about finding the support needed with newly elected delegates.

HB 6 now heads to Governor Ralph Northam (D) who will likely sign the bill into law. Governor Northam recently indicated strong support for solutions that advance housing opportunity.

"We've been working on this legislation for close to ten years," said Brian Koziol, executive director of Virginia Housing Alliance. "The sustained, collaborative effort by numerous organizations finally resulted in a true victory for households using vouchers."

Events

NHLP to Conduct Webinar on Housing Rights for Domestic Violence Survivors Who Interact with Criminal Justice System

The National Housing Law Project (NHLP) will conduct a [webinar](#), “Housing Rights for Survivors of Domestic Violence Interacting with the Criminal Justice System,” on Monday, March 30 at 3:00 p.m. ET.

Survivors of domestic violence may have engaged with the criminal justice system in ways that could potentially prevent them from living in safe, affordable, accessible housing. Often this engagement is directly related to the acts of abuse committed against them. The webinar will provide an overview of the intersection of an individual’s engagement with the criminal justice system and its impact on housing applicants seeking federally assisted and other housing.

Specific topics to be covered will include: (1) how and why survivors interact with the criminal justice system; (2) basic rules regarding admission to federally assisted housing; (3) examples of existing housing policies that permit individuals who have engaged with the criminal justice system to access housing; (4) tips on working with housing providers to assist survivors who have engaged with the criminal justice system obtain housing; and (5) the impact of nuisance and crime-free ordinances on survivors of domestic violence.

The presenters will be:

- Monica McLaughlin, director of public policy, National Network to End Domestic Violence
- Marie Claire Tran-Leung, senior attorney, Shriver Center on Poverty Law
- Lisa Sitkin, senior staff attorney, National Housing Law Project
- Mariel Block - moderator, staff attorney, National Housing Law Project

The webinar is free and will be closed-captioned.

Register for the webinar at: <https://adobe.ly/2IjgbVF>

If you have questions, e-mail Mariel Block: mblock@nhlp.org

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Week of March 1

The following are some of the news stories that NLIHC contributed to during the week of March 1:

- “The Surprising Causes of Homelessness,” *Medium*, March 3 at: <https://tinyurl.com/qm5848l>
- “Phoenix Mayor Seeks Shared Response to Housing, Homelessness,” *US News & World Report*, March 3 at: <https://tinyurl.com/ub8wp8c>
- “Atlanta leaders ponder \$100 million bond for affordable housing,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, February 28 at: <https://tinyurl.com/uznq9qq>
- “A Biden vs. Sanders race offers two differing visions for housing” *Curbed*, March 5 at: <https://tinyurl.com/tafacjv>
- “Orlando’s housing supply hit a record low this year, leaving a shortage of 6,500 homes,” *Orlando Sentinel*, March 3 at: <https://tinyurl.com/wfhuwr5>

NLIHC News

Where to Find Us – March 2

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
- Thurgood Marshall Institute Lab/Forum, New York, NY, April 28
- [Building Michigan Communities Conference](#), Lansing, MI, April 28
- [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
- National Association of Social Workers Conference, Washington, DC, June 15
- [HousingWorks RI Annual Factbook Lunch](#), Providence, RI, October 16
- [Maine Affordable Housing Coalition Conference](#), Portland, ME, November 18

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