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Housing Policy Forum 2024

Recap of NLIHC's Housing Policy Forum 2024 Featuring Tenant Organizers, House Representatives, Thought Leaders, and Others!

NLIHC hosted **Housing Policy Forum 2024: An Unwavering Path Forward to Housing Justice** at the Hilton Capitol Hill Hotel in Washington D.C. on March 19-20. The sold-out event featured a keynote discussion between NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel and scholar and civil rights attorney Sherrilyn Ifill, as well as a keynote address by journalist and author Jelani Cobb. Representatives Maxwell Frost (D-FL), Cori Bush (D-MO), and Jimmy Gomez (D-CA) spoke about the fight for affordable housing, and tenant organizers, researchers, and thought leaders participated in plenary panels focused on building the political will to achieve housing justice in the 2024 elections and on organizing for affordable housing. Attendees had the opportunity to join an array of breakout sessions on topics ranging from tenant protections, multi-sector approaches to housing advocacy, and disaster recovery housing to the current state of data on housing preservation, coalition-building in native and rural housing, and the power of storytelling. The Forum also formally launched NLIHC's year-long 50th-anniversary celebration. More than 500 advocates from around the country were in attendance, as well as nearly 200 other participants who attended virtually.

Following several pre-Forum sessions on March 18 and the morning of March 19 – including a State and Tribal Partner Convening and Tenant Leader session (see the additional articles in this issue of *Memo* for more information) – Housing Policy Forum 2024 formally began with opening remarks from NLIHC Board of Directors Chair Dora Leong Gallo. NLIHC President and CEO **Diane Yentel** then took the stage to welcome guests to the Forum.

“It’s wonderful to be together as we kick off this year recognizing and celebrating NLIHC’s 50 years of advocacy for housing justice,” said Diane. The Coalition’s history dates back to 1974, when the late Cushing Dolbeare called together several national organizations to respond to major changes to federal low-income housing programs proposed by the Nixon administration. “Since then,” explained Diane, “we have achieved so much together. We have been influential in every major piece of federal legislation related to affordable housing over the last five decades, from helping to create the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program in the ‘70s, to working with partners to enact the first-ever federal legislative response to homelessness and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program in the ‘80s, to enacting the “National Affordable Housing Act” and creating the Home Investment Partnership program in the ‘90s, to creating disaster housing recovery programs and establishing the “Protecting Renters in Foreclosure Act” in the wake of the Great Recession, to creating a national Housing Trust Fund, to defeating cuts and winning historic increases in HUD appropriations and the expansion of rental assistance over the last decade.”

“There can be no doubt that, over the last 50 years, the National Low Income Housing Coalition has had a tremendously positive impact on the lives of tens of millions of people across America,” explained Diane. However, the Coalition’s success has only been possible thanks to the unyielding efforts of all those advocates and groups that have been involved. “The National Low Income Housing Coalition isn’t just a single organization,” she said. “We are a broad and powerful network of people and organizations, across the country, who fight – and win – together for housing justice. *You* are the National Low Income Housing Coalition,” she said,

addressing the audience. It was only due to the work of those impacted people, state and local partners, and others making up the Coalition that pandemic-era relief programs like Emergency Rental Assistance, Emergency Housing Vouchers, and expanded Child Tax Credits were enacted by Congress, saving countless lives, cutting eviction filings in half, reducing child poverty by 50 percent, and ensuring that millions of low-income renters were able to stay stably housed during the pandemic.

Moreover, these successes showed clearly what has been obvious for years: “that the only thing we lack to end homelessness and achieve housing justice is the political will to do it.” The question now, she explained, is how to sustain the political will that emerged during the pandemic to achieve real, long-term solutions and keep growing the power necessary to bring about change.

“One of the clearest indications of our growing power can be seen in the tremendous accomplishments of all of you in this room over the last year, in your communities. The work of our partners, just those here in the room today, achieved collectively over \$10 billion in new state and local resources for affordable housing,” said Diane. For example, partners in Michigan secured over \$1 billion in new money for affordable housing, while partners in Alabama won \$25 million for the state’s Housing Trust Fund. Partners in Oregon and Illinois each persuaded their lawmakers to make \$200 million available for affordable housing in their states. Maine advocates won the first-ever funding for affordable housing and supportive housing and to create a statewide Housing First program, and the Minnesota Housing Partnership successfully pushed policymakers to enact a \$1.3 billion housing omnibus bill, marking the state’s largest investment in affordable housing in history.

Another indicator of the growing political power of the movement for affordable housing could be observed in the wide range of new tenant protections enacted in states and localities thanks to the work of advocates across the nation. In the last three years alone, Diane explained, NLIHC’s partners advanced and implemented nearly 300 new state and local tenant protections. Partners in Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, Delaware, and Washington, and in Denver, Detroit, Louisville, New Orleans, Seattle, and St. Louis, were instrumental in efforts to pass right-to-counsel legislation within their jurisdictions, while partners in Rhode Island and Connecticut passed laws banning rental application fees, creating a statewide rental registry, and sealing eviction records. Colorado partners helped create source-of-income protections and convinced lawmakers to crack down on junk fees. Partners in Texas and Washington helped enact Tenants Bills of Rights in their states. Minnesota partners won the passage of a comprehensive tenants’ rights package that strengthens eviction protections, landlord accountability, and health and safety requirements, and partners in New Jersey created a program that gives families and nonprofits the right of first refusal to purchase foreclosed homes and keep generational wealth. Likewise, partners at the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, working alongside tenant leaders in the state’s Resident Action Project, led a campaign for statewide rent stabilization that – although it was blocked before passage – moves them closer to the finish line in preparation for the the next legislative session.

Diane suggested that these state and local wins had begun to influence activity at the federal level. “The state and local work, especially on tenant protections, is clearly building the political will for federal action,” continued Diane, citing the White House’s unprecedented steps to

advance renter protections, including the creation of a Renters Bill of Rights that was influenced by discussions conducted during a visit to the White House by NLIHC's Tenant Leader Cohort, as well as President Biden's remarks during the State of the Union that his administration would crack down on rent gouging by landlords. Diane commended the administration for these historic actions, observing that "it's the first time in decades, since the Great Depression, that the federal government is acknowledging that there is an important federal role in preventing rent gouging. And it would not have happened without the power you've built, without all of your organizing and urging and insisting that it did."

Diane thanked those tenant leaders and other impacted people – including those on NLIHC's Board of Directors – for their role in helping lead the Coalition's efforts. "The power that we're building, and the progress we're making together, on tenant protections and beyond, is a direct result of our engaging with and elevating the leadership of tenant leaders in this work. At NLIHC, a key part of our work on racial justice and inclusion is centering and amplifying the work, the voices, and the power of impacted people." These efforts have included the creation of NLIHC's first Tenant Leader Cohorts. "Thank you for your tremendous leadership, thank for your dedication, and thank you for your work and partnership," Diane said to the members of the Cohorts.

The support of impacted people and other advocates – as well as members of the HoUSed and OSAH campaigns – was vitally important in ensuring that House Republicans did not succeed in cutting appropriations for housing and homelessness programs during the most recent budget battles, explained Diane. In fact, due to the tremendous work of advocates everywhere, in "the final FY23 spending bill [that] was just enacted...we not only prevented cuts to the housing programs that serve the lowest-income people – vouchers, public housing, homelessness programs – but also achieved *increased* funding for each, an incredibly unlikely but excellent outcome."

Diane also praised the work carried out by NLIHC's Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition and cited its successes as another indicator of growing political power. "In the last year, our Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition of over 900 organizations around the country built on its past success, fostered deep connections with disaster-impacted communities, linked those communities and their advocates with policymakers and advocacy efforts on the national stage, and forged historic victories for households with low incomes impacted by disasters."

She also explained how NLIHC is building power by fighting back against coordinated campaigns to criminalize homelessness, which are coming to a head in the upcoming Supreme Court case *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson*. Speaking of the case, Diane explained that "the City of Grants Pass – along with an alarming number of mayors and governors, both Republicans and Democrats, including California Governor Gavin Newsom – say yes, they should be able to arrest people with no place else to go for simply having a pillow. We say no, and we'll be at the Supreme Court on April 22 – along with our partners at the National Homelessness Law Center, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the National Coalition for the Homeless, and many others – to say no and to continue to demand the affordable housing and supportive services that are the real solutions to homelessness." Diane commended partners around the country – in Indiana, Kansas, and Iowa, especially – for their efforts in opposing attempts to criminalize homelessness.

Finally, Diane reminded advocates that political will is most fundamentally built at the ballot box. “There’s nothing more fundamental to building political power and political will than increasing the voter engagement of impacted people through registering, getting out the vote, and – ultimately – running for office and winning. Because the power of impacted people in elected office is undeniable. You don’t have to convince someone who experienced homelessness to prioritize solutions to homelessness when they’re in office,” said Diane, citing Representative Cori Bush as an example of the power of lived experience in office.

It is not difficult to see why policymakers favor the interests of homeowners rather than lower-income renters. “Higher-income people – predominantly homeowners, predominantly white – vote at much higher rates than lower income people – predominantly renters, predominantly people of color. So, when we ask ourselves, Why do policymakers, if they prioritize housing at all, only prioritize homeownership, or provide massive subsidies through the mortgage interest deduction to homeowners, this is why.” In order to ensure that low-income renters are represented at the ballot box this year, NLIHC has relaunched the Our Homes, Our Votes project to guarantee that candidates on both sides of the aisle and at every level of government know that affordable housing is a top priority for voters.

Diane concluded her remarks by praising the past work of advocates and looking forward to the future. “As we move into 2024, our fiftieth anniversary year, it is a pivotal year, with incredible opportunities and challenges ahead. We are ready to meet those challenges head on. We’ll gather lessons from those who came before us, those who have done this work before, for decades. We’ll galvanize the energy, creativity, and ideas of new generations that are moved to act for housing justice. We’ll build momentum with every win at the local, state, and national level. And we’ll continue growing, building power and partnerships, and moving forward into the next fifty years together on an unwavering path to housing justice.”

Following her remarks, Diane introduced the Forum’s first keynote speaker, civil rights attorney and scholar **Sherrilyn Ifill**. Ms. Ifill is currently serving as the 2023-2024 Steven and Maureen Klinsky Visiting Professor of Practice for Leadership and Progress at Harvard Law School and will soon become the first Vernon L. Jordan Chair in Civil Rights at Howard Law School. From 2013 to 2022, she was president and director-counsel of the Legal Defense and Educational Fund at the NAACP, where she led the organization in conducting groundbreaking litigation in the areas of voting rights, economic justice, and education and took a prominent role in confronting police violence against unarmed Black people. Ms. Ifill was joined by NLIHC Senior Vice President for Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Renee Willis for a discussion about racial equity and how to dismantle housing discrimination in the U.S.

Renee began the discussion by asking what had brought Ms. Ifill to her work. “This is what I wanted to do since I was a girl,” explained Ms. Ifill. “It’s why I went to law school. And I feel eternally grateful that I’ve gotten to live my dream.” Renee continued by asking what representing people at the margins had taught Ms. Ifill. Ms. Ifill suggested that it had taught her a great deal about the “puzzle” of America: “To understand racism requires that you are interested not just in voting rights, politics, and elections...but also you have to be interested in and have some knowledge of housing, employment, and labor economics and a whole range of things to understand how all the pieces fit together.” Many justices, including on the Supreme Court, do not have such knowledge – which often only comes with lived experience, she suggested – so

part of her job as an attorney is not just litigating cases but also educating judges and justices on those issues about which they may have no knowledge.

Asked about the racial inequities in housing, Ms. Ifill said that “there are many forms of discrimination and inequality in our country. Some of them are not visible to the naked eye...Housing is the one area where America’s problem of race is fully on display. And the only reason that people think they don’t see it is because we treat the physical landscape of our country as though it is inevitable.” Ms. Ifill continued by explaining that “if we wish to see the consequences, the wages of segregation, it’s right there for us to see” in our built landscape. “When we think about segregation in our country, and the visualization of segregation, we think about water fountains that say ‘white’ and ‘colored’, or bathrooms that say ‘white’ or ‘colored’, but when we see communities that say ‘white’ or ‘colored’, we assume that’s just the way it is. That’s the Black community, that’s Harlem, that’s Bed-Stuy, as though that’s not in and of itself as powerful as the [sign] that was fixed to those bathroom doors.”

Renee asked how it came to be that Black people, people of color, and Indigenous people are disproportionately extremely low-income renters. Ms. Ifill explained that being an extremely low-income renter means a lot more than just being a renter who has an extremely low income, but rather that it involves a huge range of additional conditions and challenges. “Low-income renter doesn’t really tell the story of the kind of precariousness, the kind of stress, the kind of isolation, the kind of challenges, that are inherent in American poverty...To suggest that this is just about people making more money and pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, against those odds, is outrageous, just outrageous. The obligation to provide safe, affordable housing of integrity for every America seems like the floor, the minimum for a healthy democracy. And we have really turned away from this.”

Ms. Ifill urged the adoption of policy solutions like a simple requirement “in every major city saying that for any development seeking tax breaks or other city contributions, [development plans] should include an explanation of how the plan will support the creation of affordable housing and/or promote racial and socio-economic integration in that city.”

Audience members were given the chance to ask questions at the end of the session. “Where are the places where the law can advance racial equity, and what issues can the law not influence?,” asked one. In response, Ifill cited the work of organizers in pushing to pass ordinances like the one she had just suggested. She also mentioned transportation, saying that it was inextricably linked with housing, and suggested that advances could be made in focusing on the intersections of housing and transportation, for example in advocating for the creation of rapid transit systems connecting low-income areas with urban centers.

Following the discussion with Ms. Ifill, **Congressman Maxwell Frost** (D-FL) took the stage to present remarks. He declared that housing is a human right and vowed to work to advance legislation to improve the lives of renters. “You deserve housing by virtue of being human and nothing else,” stated Representative Frost. During his remarks, he shared his personal experience with housing instability, including his challenges finding a landlord in Washington, D.C. who was willing to lease him an apartment because of his low credit score – even though he had been elected to Congress. Representative Frost is the first member of Gen Z to be elected to Congress

and he brings a fresh and unique perspective to Congress as a young, Afro-Latino organizer and community activist.

After the plenary session, attendees joined one of three breakout sessions. **“Leveling the Playing Field: Achieving Permanent Tenant Protections”** was moderated by NLIHC Vice President of State and Local Innovation Sarah Gallagher and focused on the importance of advancing federal, state, and local tenant protections that aim to divert the threat of eviction and keep renters stably housed. The panel was joined by Marie Claire Tran-Leung, evictions initiative project director at the National Housing Law Project (NHLP); David Pringle, director of state and local engagement at the Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC); Jonathan Jager, staff attorney at the Community Development Project; and Jasmine Rangel, senior housing associate at Policy Link. During the session, panelists spoke about a variety of crucial protections that can be implemented by lawmakers across the country to minimize the risk of tenant displacement and rectify the pronounced power imbalance that exists between landlords and tenants today. The session began with remarks by Sarah, who spoke about the rising momentum in state and local jurisdictions nationwide to enact renter supports, especially as the lowest-income renters continue to contend with the after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the rental housing market. Sarah highlighted how state and local jurisdictions across the country have passed more than 280 tenant protections since January 2021, including “just cause” eviction standards, right to counsel protections, rent stabilization laws, and source-of-income anti-discrimination policies. Marie Claire spoke next and focused on the importance of enacting a broad but uniform set of federal tenant protections for renter households in the private rental market. David Pringle spoke about the importance of advancing source-of-income protections to ensure that tenants who receive public assistance through the form of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers are not denied housing. Jonathan Jager recounted his work in Los Angeles to advance and implement a citywide “Tenant Bill of Rights.” He also spoke about the crucial role that tenant organizing played in securing rent stabilization protections, universal just cause, limitations on evictions for nonpayment of rent, relocation assistance for tenants displaced through no-fault causes, tenant anti-harassment policies, right to counsel, and proactive code enforcement laws. The session wrapped up with Jasmine Rangel speaking about her work to provide data-driven, evidence-based solutions to prevent evictions. In addition to discussing just cause protections and rent stabilization laws and ordinances, she described her work to assist tenant advocates in Philadelphia to build the case and showcase the need for eviction record sealing protections – an effective tool to ensure that tenants who have had an eviction filed against them are not denied housing due to their public court record.

“A Multi-Sector Approach to Achieving Justice and Equity at the Intersections of Housing, Environment, and Health” was hosted by members of NLIHC’s Opportunity Starts at Home (OSAH) campaign and attended by more than 100 participants. Panelists include Chantelle Wilkinson, OSAH campaign director; Dr. Sabrina Johnson, senior housing policy advocate at Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC); and Edgar Barraza, energy equity policy coordinator at Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA). The speakers discussed how findings from a recent NRDC and PSR-LA [report](#) on centering environmental justice and health equity in building decarbonization clearly demonstrate the importance of equitable housing policies. Those working to advance environmental causes and health equity often cite housing justice as critical for ensuring sustainable and healthy communities, and Dr. Johnson and Barraza both shared how housing fits into their work as environmental and health

advocates. The panelists concluded the session by sharing what they look forward to as partnerships between housing, health, and environmental advocates continue to grow, as well as why they each believe coalitions are needed to combat the housing affordability crisis. “We want good, affordable homes on healthy lands, and to end the vicious cycle of poisoning our people,” said Barraza, when speaking about the intersections of affordable housing, health, and environmental justice.

A third breakout session, “**Changing Lanes: Integrating Housing and Homelessness Best Practices with Disaster Response and Recovery,**” dealt with disaster recovery and housing. The panel featured Katherine Galifianakis, senior director of shelter transition at the American Red Cross; Sara Hicks-West, disaster subject matter expert at Cloudburst Group; and Natalie Maxwell, managing attorney at the National Housing Law Project. The panel focused on efforts to operationalize housing best practices during disaster response and recovery, with a specific focus on rapid rehousing efforts during the closure of disaster-related emergency shelters, the creation and implementation of HUD’s Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing (RUSH) Program, and the use of eviction moratoriums in the aftermath of disasters. Katherine Galifianakis gave an overview of the shelter transition process as it currently operates, describing the recent shift in thinking among disaster practitioners to fully address housing needs during shelter closure, as opposed to working to support disaster survivors experiencing homelessness after shelters have closed. She highlighted efforts like those to close mass shelters in Houston after Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and in North Carolina after Hurricane Florence in 2018. She also discussed how homeless and housing service organizations are needed to better improve disaster sheltering operations. Sara Hicks-West discussed the creation and implementation of the RUSH program, which was first deployed in Florida following Hurricane Ian in 2022. She described how the program operates, challenges to its implementation in Florida, and how the program grew from those efforts in Texas and North Carolina. Hicks-West echoed Kathrine Galifianakis’ earlier point that cooperation from organizations involved in Continuums of Care in areas impacted by disasters would be crucial to the ongoing success of the program. Natalie Maxwell discussed the use of eviction moratoriums in the aftermath of disasters. This practice, which was implemented nationwide during the COVID-19 pandemic, has gained favor in recent years, as advocates and researchers continue to demonstrate the impact disasters have on tenants, housing stock, and rent prices. Natalie highlighted local eviction moratoriums currently in effect in San Diego and the island of Maui and highlighted federal legislation that would seek to create automatic eviction moratorium in areas impacted by disasters.

Following the breakout sessions, in-person attendees helped kick off NLIHC’s official anniversary celebration by attending the **NLIHC50 Anniversary Reception** in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Capitol Hill Hotel. Participants closed out the night by attending a viewing of the documentary “**Razing Liberty Square,**” which explores climate gentrification and community erasure.

Wednesday morning began with the Forum’s second plenary session, “**Our Homes, Our Votes: Building the Political Will for Housing Justice in the 2024 Elections.**” The session showcased the work of NLIHC’s nonpartisan *Our Homes, Our Votes* campaign, which aims to boost voter turnout among low-income renters and elevate housing as an election issue. The panel featured Dr. Bambi Hayes-Brown, president and CEO of Georgia ACT and member of the NLIHC Board of Directors; Lauren Legocki, director of community impact at POAH Communities; and

Mary McGovern, president of the Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council. Courtney Cooperman, project manager of the *Our Homes, Our Votes* campaign, moderated the panel.

Courtney opened the plenary with an overview of voter turnout gaps between low-income renters and high-income homeowners, underscoring the importance of nonpartisan civic engagement work. She gave a snapshot of the tools and resources that *Our Homes, Our Votes* will provide to support partners' work in the 2024 election cycle, including the brand-new [Our Homes, Our Votes TurboVote platform](#), where voters can register, sign up for election reminders, and find nonpartisan election information for their own communities.

Each panelist gave an overview of their organization's nonpartisan election work in recent elections and discussed strategies that housing advocates, tenant leaders, and service providers can use to get out the vote in the 2024 election cycle. Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown shared lessons learned from Georgia ACT's grassroots outreach to voters across the state, including collaboration with Black Voters Matter's "The Block is Hot Tour" and F.R.E.S.H. Communities' "3-V Liberation Tour," which brought Votes, Vaccines, and Visions to 47 rural Georgia counties in 2021. Dr. Bambie also highlighted Georgia ACT's relationship-building with newly elected officials to strengthen the political will for housing justice.

Lauren Legocki presented on POAH Communities' integration of voter registration into existing touchpoints (move-in and outreach when residents turn 18), activities to ensure that residents feel confident about voting, and the role of resident input and leadership in shaping voter engagement initiatives. Lauren emphasized the importance of providing resources, such as voter registration toolkits and get-out-the-vote call scripts, that enable frontline staff to bring voter participation opportunities to their communities without reinventing the wheel.

Mary McGovern discussed Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council's (MHRC) voter registration, education, and get-out-the-vote activities, which reach more than 5,000 residents across 42 high-rise buildings. Mary noted the success of one-on-one conversations in helping residents understand why voting matters in their own lives and pre-election activities to generate excitement about voting. She also described the powerful impact of MHRC's nonpartisan candidate forums in local elections, which make residents' priorities visible to candidates and lay the groundwork for strong relationships with newly elected officials.

The plenary concluded with audience questions about engaging young voters, recruiting landlords to get involved, conducting nonpartisan outreach to candidates, and convincing prospective voters that their vote matters.

Attendees then participated in one of four breakout sessions. **"What Can We Know about Affordable Housing Preservation Needs?"** focused on the current state of data for affordable housing preservation, explored how data can inform organizing and preservation planning, and identified ways that preservation data can be improved at the local, state, and federal levels. The panelists provided perspectives on preservation data challenges rooted in their work at the building, local, state, and national levels. Stephanie Winn, a LIHTC tenant organizer affiliated with Texas Housers, spoke about the need to understand housing quality challenges faced by tenants and the necessity of ensuring that preservation efforts produce tangible results. Dr. Kathryn Howell, director of the National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education and

an associate professor at the University of Maryland, discussed the importance of data in building consensus around local preservation efforts and the need to better understand preservation risks for “naturally occurring affordable housing.” Megan Bolton, assistant research director at Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS), detailed recent state-led efforts in Oregon to develop comprehensive preservation data and actively monitor emerging preservation risks across the state. Finally, Kelly McElwain, manager of research and industry intelligence at the Public and Affordable Housing Research Corporation (PAHRC), presented on the National Housing Preservation Database (NHPD) and challenges with creating a national baseline for assessing affordable housing preservation risks. The panel was moderated by NLIHC Research Manager Dan Emmanuel.

“Partnerships and Coalition-Building in Native and Rural Housing” focused on how to build lasting coalitions in two communities that are often overlooked. Panelists included Sharon Vogel, executive director of the Cheyenne River Housing Authority in Eagle Butte, South Dakota on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation and an NLIHC board member; Mel Willie, director of Native partnerships and strategy at NeighborWorks America; Samantha Booth, government relations manager at the Housing Assistance Council (HAC); and Jeff Ackley, Jr., the housing administrator of the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa Housing Authority. Samantha presented HAC’s latest data from the group’s Taking Stock report, highlighting the urgent housing needs in rural areas. Samantha noted that 87% of all U.S. counties have at least one USDA Section 515 Multifamily Property, and Sharon Vogel observed that using USDA’s housing programs, such as the 502 Direct Loan program, has helped Native communities build more affordable housing. Samantha and Sharon also highlighted recent legislative victories in building support for the “Rural Housing Service Reform Act” and the “Veterans Affairs Native American Direct Loan Improvement Act.” Mel discussed the need for Native and non-Native coalitions to identify a shared mission and change the legacy of exploitation with trust, humility, and equal partnership. Jeff added that Native and non-Native partners must “never stop learning and striving to help” their communities and shared his insights from the perspectives of both housing authority staff and a school board member. Breakout session attendees asked about losing rural homes to short-term rentals and second homes, how Tribal communities preserve their rental housing, and about partnerships between Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and Native communities.

In **“The Power of Storytelling: Shaping the Narrative on How to Achieve Housing Justice,”** attendees heard from Marisol Bello, executive director of Housing Narrative Lab; Miracle Fletcher, NLIHC Collective Cohort member and advocate; and May Louis-Juste, senior communication specialist at NLIHC. Together, the panelists delved into the transformative power of storytelling from various perspectives: organizational, personal lived experience, and the broader impact on advocacy, Congress, and the media. The session kicked off with Marisol offering a deep dive into the crafting of narratives and the empowering potential of sharing experiences to drive change. Through compelling video snippets, such as the impactful story of “Moms 4 Housing” and a touching call to action on deforestation, attendees witnessed firsthand how storytelling can evoke emotions and spur action. Miracle then shared her own journey, emphasizing the importance of authenticity in storytelling and its ability to resonate not just with individuals but entire communities. She stressed the need for intentional storytelling that amplifies voices and empowers others to do the same, urging advocates to take ownership of their narratives for effective communication. Last, May shed light on NLIHC’s strategic

approach to storytelling, emphasizing the vital role of genuine connections with those with lived experiences in shaping narratives that drive housing justice advocacy and policy solutions. The session concluded with thought-provoking discussions on building authentic connections with those with lived experiences, navigating the ethical use of advocates' stories, and leveraging narratives to shift perceptions, for example about the right of formerly incarcerated individuals to affordable housing.

In “**Climate Gentrification and Community Erasure: Are the Themes Highlighted in Razing Liberty Square Coming to a Community Near You?**,” attendees heard from panelists who were featured in the previous evening’s film about the overarching themes and issues highlighted in the [documentary](#). Panelists discussed the impacts of the displacement of Black and Brown residents in Miami on communities, how developers and policymakers have played a part in mass displacement, and how climate intersects with these issues. Attendees heard from Valencia Gunder, an activist and organizer who can be seen in the documentary discussing the impact of climate gentrification on vulnerable communities in Miami and across the country. Trenise Bryant, a longtime Liberty City resident and former resident of Scott Carver, another housing development that was razed, leading to the displacement of its residents, including Trenise. She spoke about her perspective as a former Scott Carver resident seeing the events happening to Liberty Square and explained how she had organized and mobilized her community in the wake of displacement and gentrification. Aaron McKinney, who was highlighted in the film, spoke about his perspective as a Liberty City resident who worked with the developer group that razed Liberty Square and eventually left the group. Aaron discussed how his outlook on the project changed throughout the film, as he saw promises made to residents being broken or disregarded, and the impacts the changes had on the community and residents as they determined their next steps to maintain housing. The panel was moderated by Daniella Pierre of the NAACP Miami-Dade County Branch and an NLIHC Collective Member who is from Miami and understands the impacts of gentrification on communities in the city.

Following the morning breakout sessions, participants attended the day’s second plenary session. **Representative Cori Bush (D-MO)** kicked off the session by speaking passionately about her personal experience with housing insecurity, eviction, and homelessness and the upcoming Supreme Court case *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, which could decide whether localities can fine, ticket, or arrest unhoused people for sleeping outside, even when there is no adequate shelter or housing available. “The federal government has the duty and obligation to provide housing for every unhoused person,” stated Representative Bush. “Was *I* a criminal?” asked Rep. Bush rhetorically, speaking of when she was unhoused and had no option but to sleep in her car. The Congresswoman made clear how her lived expertise is an essential component of her leadership in advancing housing justice and declared that “the decriminalization of homelessness is a racial justice issue.”

Next, NLIHC Tenant Leader Fellow Dee Ross moderated a panel discussion on “**Building Power: How to Organize for Housing Justice.**” Panelists included Duaa-Rahemaah Hunter of Resident Action Project in Washington State; Ramona Ferreyra of Save Section 9 in New York; and Benjamin Finegan of Bozeman Tenants United in Montana. The panelists talked about how tenant leaders and their allies are organizing for housing justice in communities of all sizes, regions, and political stripes. The speakers discussed how organizers are generating momentum and achieving victories in public housing, unsubsidized buildings, urban and rural communities,

and states regardless of political leanings. The organizers shared insights from organizing in their own communities and discussed universal principles and practices that can apply in any campaign for housing justice. During a question-and-answer session, audience members asked how the panelists had gotten started in organizing, where aspiring tenant leaders could go for support and training in areas without organizers or citywide tenant unions, and how attorneys and policy advocates could support tenants and organizers.

The afternoon commenced with four more breakout sessions. NLIHC Tenant Leader Fellow Dee Ross moderated a **“Teach-In: Organizing”** session. The session was facilitated by NLIHC Collective Cohort members Rob Robinson of Partners for Dignity and Rights; Tara Madison of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants; Ramona Ferreyra of Save Section 9; Albert Townsend of the National Alliance to End Homelessness; Shannon “Sunshine” Washington of Sunshine Charity Community Investment Coalition; and Willie “JR” Fleming of Chicago Anti Eviction Campaign. The session began with brief introductions, followed by an explanation of planned activities. Participants were then divided into breakout tables, each focusing on a specific housing justice scenario, and conversations were facilitated by experienced leaders in the field. The role-playing segment allowed participants to engage with the complexities of each scenario, fostering empathy, understanding, and practical problem-solving skills. The session concluded with a reflective Q&A session, enabling participants to further explore key insights and takeaways. The session brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds, representing a range of races, beliefs, and lived experiences, who were united in their commitment to achieving housing justice, and every participant was actively engaged and interacted enthusiastically with their fellow group members, fostering a sense of solidarity and collective purpose.

In **“Building Support for Evidence-Based Homelessness Solutions,”** panelists examined how advocates can advance proven solutions to homelessness despite the worsening affordable housing crisis and growing calls for ineffective and punitive approaches. NLIHC Senior Policy Analyst Alayna Calabro moderated the panel, which included Steve Berg, chief policy officer at the National Alliance to End Homelessness; Mackenzie Kelly, interim executive director of the Chattanooga Regional Homeless Coalition; Shawn Liu, director of communications at the Department of Veterans’ Affairs Homeless Programs Office; and Donald Whitehead, executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless. The panelists highlighted the role of Housing First in reducing homelessness among veterans and discussed how Chattanooga achieved a significant reduction in homelessness by implementing a Housing First strategy and developing a Flexible Housing Fund to overcome barriers to housing. Additionally, the panelists addressed the criminalization of homelessness and discussed the upcoming Supreme Court case *Grants Pass v. Johnson*, which could change how communities address unsheltered homelessness and treat unhoused people. The panelists also outlined what federal investments are needed to fully end housing instability and homelessness and discussed how to uplift the voices of people with lived experience as we work to change public perceptions of homelessness and advance solutions.

“Accessible to Whom? Inclusive Housing and the Disability Justice Movement” invited participants to contribute to a conversation about housing access for people with disabilities. The conversation was led by disability justice advocates including Zella Knight of [Resident United Network Los Angeles \(RUNLA\)](#) and a member of NLIHC’s board of directors; Hunter Herrera-McFarland of [The Kelsey](#); Monica Porter Gilbert of the [Judge David L. Bazelon Center for](#)

[Mental Health Law](#); and Melissa Marshall of the [The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies](#). The discussion was moderated by NLIHC Project Manager of Inclusive Community Engagement Sidney Betancourt. Zella emphasized the importance of understanding the rights of people with disabilities and advocating for greater accessibility and affordability in housing. Hunter discussed how The Kelsey surpasses legal accessibility standards in the development of homes and federal policy solutions that can make these standards a reality nationwide. Monica highlighted diverse forms of disabilities, including mental illness, as well as the [Johnson vs. Grants Pass](#) case's impact on the disability community. She also mentioned the effect of junk fees like “pet rent” on the disability community. Melissa focused on The Partnership's role in disability justice during disaster recovery and resilience efforts, as the world sees a rapid increase of disasters impacting more communities. Attendees had the opportunity to engage in a fruitful conversation, with the panel asking questions about accessibility and disability justice. Through this discussion, attendees gained insights and wisdom about advocating for disability justice while also championing affordable housing.

The final breakout session, **“Locked Up, Locked Out: Barriers to Housing for Formerly Incarcerated and Convicted People,”** featured experts on the relationship between incarceration, housing, and homelessness who explained the barriers to housing for formerly incarcerated and convicted people, highlighted policies and communities paving the way for reentry services, and discussed the federal solutions needed to ensure everyone has a safe place to call home. Panelists included Dr. Ronald Day, senior vice president at the [Fortune Society](#) and a person who was formerly incarcerated; Taylar Nuevelle, the founder and executive director of [Who Speaks for Me?](#) (WSFM) and who was also formerly incarcerated; Marie Claire Tran-Leung, Evictions Initiative project director and a senior staff attorney at the National Housing Law Project (NHLP); Jesse Rabinowitz, campaign and communications director at the National Homelessness Law Center ([NHLHC](#)), where he leads the [Housing Not Handcuffs campaign](#). NLIHC Policy Manager Kim Johnson moderated. Dr. Day and Taylar opened the panel by sharing their insights about the barriers to obtaining and maintaining safe, stable housing after exiting incarceration and the ways in which things have changed – or in some cases, failed to change – for the people they help with reentry services today. Marie Claire discussed some of the formalized barriers to housing for formerly incarcerated and convicted people, including the broad discretion owners and operators of federally assisted housing have in screening out potential tenants with conviction histories. Marie Claire and Dr. Day shared their insights on enacting fair chance housing ordinances in Cook County, Illinois, and New York City, respectively. Fair chance housing laws set needed boundaries on tenant screenings, like limiting the kinds of convictions housing providers can screen for or the lookback period for conviction histories. Without a fair chance at accessing housing, too often people exit incarceration into homelessness, and homelessness in turn increases the likelihood of interacting with law enforcement, creating a vicious cycle of incarceration, homelessness, and reincarceration. Jesse rounded out the panel by describing how the increased criminalization of homelessness and the pending Supreme Court case will reinforce this cycle and create even more housing instability and homelessness.

The Forum concluded with the day's third and final plenary session. **Congressman Jimmy Gomez (D-CA)** kicked the session off by speaking about his efforts to create the first-ever Congressional Renters Caucus to serve as “a launching pad for legislative efforts and advocacy

to finally give renters a voice in Washington.” He spoke about the need for a bold legislative agenda to ensure that housing is the primary priority for Congress going forward.

Journalist and author **Dr. Jelani Cobb** then delivered a keynote address on achieving housing justice. Dr. Cobb began his remarks by thanking advocates for the work they do. “I’m an observer and an analyst,” he said, but “without people doing the work that you’ve been doing, for the time you’ve been doing it, I have nothing to observe and nothing to analyze.” He thanked the audience for “doing the work that allows us to incrementally move forward as a society toward a more equitable landscape.” He described how he had helped start the Inequality Project in response to conversations about the murder of George Floyd, the pandemic, and the pandemic-induced recession. He explained how he had realized that rather than three different conversations, they were in fact one conversation – about inequality. Inequality, he explained, is not a new problem but is instead like an “operating system that receives periodic updates.” Among the primary types of inequality in the U.S. is housing inequality, which, Dr. Cobb explained, has been baked into the country’s housing system from the very beginning but has recurred in different forms over time, including through restrictive covenants and redlining. He recounted the process through which he realized how fundamentally housing discrimination was connected to other types of discrimination, like police violence targeting Black people. He explained a revelation he had in the wake of the murder of George Floyd: “I had been reporting all these police stories, but I had really been reporting housing stories. I had been downstream from what the actual driver of the situation was.” He concluded by explaining how important unpredictable changes in context are to the fight for equality. Even when advocacy can seem hopeless and change impossible, sudden changes in social contexts can allow new possibilities and developments in the push for equality, and advocates should keep this in mind when their idealism flags or hope fades. Dr. Cobb finished his session by taking questions from the audience about what practices have worked in advancing equality historically, and what can be done to encourage journalists to focus on issues that matter, like housing.

Following Dr. Cobb’s address, NLIHC Board Chair **Dora Leong Gallo** delivered closing remarks, thanked participants and attendees, and urged advocates to join Capitol Hill Day the following day to transform the two days of discussion and brainstorming into action.

NLIHC thanks all those who attended Housing Policy Forum 2024: An Unwavering Path Forward to Housing Justice and made the event such a success. We look forward to seeing you at next year’s Forum!

Tenants Engage in Federal Advocacy during Two-Day Tenant Session at Housing Policy Forum

For more than 20 years, NLIHC has hosted a tenant leader session at its annual Housing Policy Forum. In the lead-up to this year’s Housing Policy Forum 2024: An Unwavering Path Forward to Housing Justice, NLIHC held a two-day, hybrid tenant session, “Tenants Creating a Just Housing Reality,” that brought together tenant and community leaders for a series of panels, sessions, and discussions about the current state of housing justice advocacy. For the first time ever, NLIHC also included in the tenant meeting a breakout session featuring HUD staff.

Attendees engaged directly with staff from the agency, who fielded questions and discussed concerns about a variety of topics, including public housing, vouchers, and tenant organizing.

The session began with a welcome from NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel, who highlighted the centrality of tenant leaders in NLIHC's work. NLIHC Project Manager for Inclusive Community Engagement Sidney Betancourt then introduced members of NLIHC's 2023-2024 Collective to attendees, and NLIHC Tenant Leader Fellow Dee Ross shared a moving piece of spoken word addressing the pressing issues facing tenants today and including a call for deep engagement in the tenant session. After Dee's words, the session's facilitator, Rebeccah Bennett, the founder and principal of Emerging Wisdom, guided an opening activity during which in-person and virtual attendees had the opportunity to meet and talk.

Following the opening activity, attendees participated in a workshop, "Overview of HUD Programs," featuring staff from HUD. The conversation began with an overview of the goals and priorities for HUD's Public Housing, Project-Based Rental Assistance, Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, and Fair Housing programs. Geraldine Collins, executive director of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants and an NLIHC board member, moderated a conversation with Richard J. Monocchio, principal deputy assistant secretary in HUD's Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH); Ethan Handelman, deputy assistant secretary in HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing Programs; and Lynn Grosso, deputy assistant secretary for enforcement in HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity.



Next, attendees were invited to attend one of three breakout sessions featuring HUD staff. Each session adopted a town hall format that allowed tenants to engage directly with HUD personnel. One session focused on Public Housing/RAD, was moderated by Ramona Ferreyra (a member of the NLIHC Collective), and included Todd Thomas, director of the Office of Public Housing

Programs, and Thomas Davis, director of the Office of Recapitalization. Another session focused on Project-Based Rental Assistance, was moderated by Tara Madison of NLIHC's Collective, and featured Ethan Handelman, deputy assistant secretary of the Office of Multifamily Housing Programs, and Robert Iber, senior advisor in the Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary. The last session addressed organizing in subsidized and non-subsidized housing, was moderated by Dee Ross, and featured Kymian Ray, director of Public Housing Management and Occupancy; Libby Fernandez, supervisory program analyst in the Office of Multifamily Housing Programs; and Parker Lester, program analyst with the Office of Multifamily Housing Programs.



The sessions provided a space for informed dialogue, knowledge exchange, and relationship-building between attendees. By elevating tenant voices and perspectives, the sessions not only addressed immediate challenges but also paved the way for ongoing collaboration and policy improvement. The engagement with HUD officials exemplified the importance of inclusive decision-making and the potential for positive change when community members are actively involved.

The first day of the Tenant Session concluded with a dinner attended by tenant leaders and members of NLIHC's state and tribal partner network. The dinner opened with remarks by Cathy Alderman, chief communications and public policy officer of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, state and tribal partner caucus chair, and an NLIHC board member, and Geraldine Collins, executive director of the National Alliance of HUD Tenants (NAHT) and an NLIHC board member. Dinner guests enjoyed a performance by SongRise, a D.C.-based women's social justice cappella group that performed songs directly related to social justice movements, such as "A Change is Gonna Come" by Sam Cooke, "Bread and Roses" by Judy Collins, and

“Mountain Song” by Holly Near and Emma’s Revolution. The dinner concluded with guests participating in guided conversations with prompts to foster deeper connection and discussion.

Facilitator Rebeccah Bennett began the second day of the session by setting the tone with a wellness and liberation exercise. She discussed the connections between wellness and liberation, engaging participants in an interactive gratitude practice, and had participants share their personal healing methods with the entire group.

Following Rebeccah’s introductory workshop, Collective member Shannon “Sunshine” Washington of Sunshine Charity Community Investment Coalition and Sunshine Tenant Authority Patrol and Support moderated a panel discussion, “Challenges of Building a Movement.” The panel included Tara Madison, member of NLIHC’s Collective; Miracle Fletcher, housing commissioner of the City of Atlanta; and Dee Ross, founder of the Indiana Tenants Association and NLIHC Tenant Leader Fellow. The session highlighted the tendency among tenant leaders to overthink and strive for perfection and emphasized the importance of providing consistent leadership over simply increasing numbers. Participants discussed effective storytelling strategies, as well as the reluctance of some tenants to share their experiences due to fear of retaliation. By showcasing the tenant association itself as a “narrative representation,” participants explored alternative ways to amplify voices while ensuring tenant safety. The session was well-received, with attendees expressing gratitude for practical insights and ideas about best practices that would enable them to initiate meaningful change in their communities.

After the workshop, participants had the opportunity once again to interact directly with HUD staff one-on-one during a “HUD Office Hours” session. The session provided a space for informal discussions about tenant experiences in HUD programs. Participants also utilized this time for networking with each other.



The Tenant Session concluded with heartfelt remarks from the facilitator, Rebecca Bennett, as participants enjoyed lunch together and geared up for the start of NLIHC's Housing Policy Forum. Moving forward, both tenant leaders and NLIHC look forward to continuing tenant-led sessions and collaborations aimed at advancing housing justice and tenant empowerment.

NLIHC State and Tribal Partners Attend Pre-Forum Convening in Washington, D.C.

NLIHC [state and tribal partners](#) from around the country convened for two days of peer-learning, networking, and panel discussions with national partners and guests from the Biden administration on March 18 and 19. Forty-six individuals representing partner organizations from more than 30 states and tribal regions attended the convening, which took place immediately before NLIHC's 2024 Housing Policy Forum: An Unwavering Path Forward to Housing Justice. In addition to offering a number of sessions and panels, the convening included an inspiring dinner with tenant leaders featuring a performance by [SongRise](#), a women's social justice a cappella group.

The State and Tribal Partner Convening began with remarks and updates from NLIHC staff and board members. State and tribal partners introduced themselves and shared their recent advocacy successes and challenges. The group then dove into peer-led conversations about a variety of topics. Staff from the [Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development](#) described their efforts advocating for the District of Columbia's "Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act." Partners from [Housing Action Illinois](#) and the [Coalition for the Homeless](#) in New York summarized their work to ensure that the housing needs of asylum-seekers and migrants are met. Staff from the [Colorado Coalition for the Homeless](#) and the [Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio](#), both members of NLIHC's current racial equity cohort, talked about strategies to advance racial equity within their organizations and with external partners, while partners from the [Washington Low Income Housing Alliance](#) explained how they have centered the voices of residents within their organization. NLIHC's research team shared its plans to conduct a national survey of renters and collect feedback from partners.

The second day of the convening began with a panel discussion by national partners about the dangerous trend of states and localities criminalizing homelessness and the upcoming Supreme Court case *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson*. Representatives from NLIHC, the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#), [National Coalition for the Homeless](#), [National Homelessness Law Center](#), and [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) described how they are working together in new ways to support advocates on the ground and build a national movement for housing justice.

The panel was followed by a conversation with Chad Maisel, special assistant to the president for housing and urban policy. Mr. Maisel spoke about the Biden administration's unprecedented efforts to expand renter protections, increase housing supply, further fair housing laws, and highlight the issue of housing affordability in the recent State of the Union.

Next, staff from NLIHC's nonpartisan *Our Homes, Our Votes* campaign provided updates on their work. Partners from the [Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness](#), [Housing Network of Rhode Island](#), and [Housing Alliance Pennsylvania](#) shared examples of how they are mobilizing low-income renters to vote and elevating housing as a critically important issue in this year's elections. The convening concluded with partners sharing highlights of their time together.

NLIHC's state and tribal partners are those member organizations with which the Coalition works most closely in each state or region of the country. Partners receive specialized support to enhance their participation in federal housing advocacy and in turn commit to being primary advocates for housing for the lowest-income renters in their regions and educating and mobilizing their networks around NLIHC's policy priorities. Currently, NLIHC has 66 state partners operating in 45 states and the District of Columbia, as well as one tribal partner operating in the Northern Plains. NLIHC is always seeking to add new state and tribal partners, particularly in geographic regions without an existing partner. For more information about becoming an NLIHC state or tribal partner, please [review](#) the qualifications and expectations.

Advocates Push Members of Congress to Advance Essential Housing Legislation during NLIHC's Capitol Hill Day

NLIHC hosted a hybrid Capitol Hill Day on March 21 during which advocates from around the country pushed their members of Congress to advance essential affordable housing legislation. Held on the last day of Housing Policy Forum 2024: An Unwavering Path Forward to Housing Justice, Capitol Hill Day brought together state and tribal partners, housing providers, tenant associations, and homeless service agencies, as well as tenants with lived expertise, who together conducted more than 170 meetings with congressional offices representing 30 states.

Participants met virtually and in person with their members of Congress to urge them to oppose cuts to federal investments in affordable housing and homelessness and instead provide the most funding possible for affordable housing and homelessness programs in fiscal years (FY) 2024 and 2025. Participants also discussed NLIHC's top policy priorities for the upcoming year, which include opposing efforts to criminalize homelessness, as well as advocating for enactment of the "[Fair Housing Improvement Act](#)," "[Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act](#)," and the "[Eviction Crisis Act](#)." View NLIHC's full list of Hill Day advocacy priorities and tips in our [toolkit](#).

NLIHC thanks all those advocates who participated in Hill Day virtually and in person in Washington D.C. To keep the momentum going, advocates are encouraged to contact their members of Congress [here](#). Anyone who is interested in scheduling meetings with senators and representatives or becoming more engaged in NLIHC's work is encouraged to reach out to their [state's field organizer](#) or contact NLIHC's Field Team at outreach@nlihc.org.

HoUsed Campaign for Universal, Stable, Affordable Homes

Congressional Renters Caucus Announces New Policy Agenda Focused on Renters

Representative Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), chair and founder of the Congressional Renters Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives, joined housing advocates and other members of the Renters Caucus in [announcing](#) the first-ever “Renters Agenda” on March 21. The [Renters Agenda](#) presents a set of major policy goals along with corresponding bills to protect and uplift the 44 million renters in the U.S. NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel spoke at a [press event](#) announcing the agenda.

The Renters Caucus policy agenda includes NLIHC’s top policy priorities: the “Ending Homelessness Act of 2023” ([H.R.4232](#)); the “Housing Crisis Response Act of 2023” ([H.R.4233](#)); the “Stable Families Act” ([H.R.8327](#)), the House companion bill to the U.S Senate’s “Eviction Crisis Act” ([S.2182](#)); the “Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act” ([H.R.3776](#)); reforms to LIHTC to better serve extremely low-income households; and other bills endorsed by NLIHC.

“On behalf of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, I applaud Congressman Jimmy Gomez and the rest of the Congressional Renters Caucus for endorsing major legislation to invest in proven solutions at the scale needed to end America’s affordable housing and homelessness crisis once and for all,” said Diane Yentel at the press conference.

“With the launch of the first-ever Renters Agenda, we’re putting the growing population of renters at the heart of federal housing strategy,” said Rep. Gomez. “The three pillars of this agenda – lower costs, increase supply and remove barriers – form the foundation of a more fair and equitable housing system, where renters can afford a safe place to live regardless of income or ZIP code. This agenda is not a wish list – it’s a blueprint for addressing the rent burden that is exacerbating the country’s housing crisis. The 37 members of the Renters Caucus are ready to put up a fight for this agenda that stands up for renters.”



Read the press release at: <https://tinyurl.com/ye8eck7k>

Watch the press conference at: <https://tinyurl.com/5f6ttf2f>

Learn about the Renters Agenda at: <https://tinyurl.com/bdmtxr3>

Senator Sanders and Representative Ocasio-Cortez Reintroduce the “Green New Deal for Public Housing Act”

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) [reintroduced](#) on March 21 the “[Green New Deal for Public Housing Act](#).” The bill would create two new grant programs to rehabilitate and upgrade public housing to decrease health hazards and improve energy-efficiency while also aiming to transition the entire public housing stock into zero-carbon, highly energy-efficient developments as swiftly as possible. The legislation would address the substantial public housing capital backlog by ensuring that all public housing meets safe and sanitary standards. NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel spoke at a [press event](#) announcing the bill’s reintroduction.

The Green New Deal for Public Housing Act would allow for an increase in public housing units, create an estimated 280,000 jobs, and invest up to \$23 billion a year over 10 years in highly energy-efficient developments. In order to transform more than 970,000 units of public housing, the bill would repeal the Faircloth Amendment, which limits the construction of new public housing developments – an important step toward providing affordable housing for all – while also ensuring all public housing is in safe, sanitary, and sustainable condition and expanding resident councils so that public housing residents have a seat at the table when it comes to making important decisions regarding their homes.

“On behalf of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, I applaud Senator Bernie Sanders and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for their bold, ambitious proposal to not only help preserve America’s public housing for current and future residents, but to modernize these homes to 21st-century green standards, while also helping to ensure that low-income residents benefit from green job and training opportunities,” said NLIHC’s Diane Yentel. “We must combat the affordable housing crisis and climate change – both of which most harm people of color and people with the lowest incomes – through innovative, holistic and bold visions like the Green New Deal for Public Housing.”



Read the press release at: <https://tinyurl.com/3px863un>

Read a one-pager about the bill at: <https://tinyurl.com/mpawahue>

Read the bill text at: <https://tinyurl.com/yudjmd8e>

NLIHC and OSAH Send Letters to Senate Banking Committee on Bipartisan Housing Package

[NLIHC](#) and the [Opportunity Starts at Home \(OSAH\) campaign](#) sent letters to Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Tim Scott (R-SC), chair and ranking member, respectively, of the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, on March 14 and March 18. The letters urge the inclusion of several bills – including the “Eviction Crisis Act” and the “Family

Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act” – in a bipartisan housing package. Read NLIHC’s [letter](#) and the OSAH campaign’s [letter](#).

New Democrat Coalition Affordable Housing Task Force Unveils Housing Action Plan

The New Democrat Coalition’s Affordable Housing Task Force, led by Chair Norma J. Torres (D-CA) and Vice Chairs Greg Landsman (D-OH), Wiley Nickel (D-NC), and Emilia Sykes (D-OH), [released](#) a comprehensive [Housing Action Plan](#) on March 20. One of the largest Democrat caucuses in the U.S. House of Representatives, the New Democrat Coalition comprises nearly 100 Democrats who are committed to pro-innovation and pro-growth policies and bipartisan approaches to policymaking.

The NLIHC-endorsed Housing Action Plan supports universal rental assistance for all eligible households and bolsters the national Housing Trust Fund – two major priorities of NLIHC’s [HoUSed campaign](#). Additionally, the plan supports ongoing funding for emergency rental assistance and reforms to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program to better serve extremely low-income, tribal, and rural households.

The New Democrat Coalition Housing Action Plan includes more than 20 policy recommendations to address five key components of affordable housing: housing supply, permitting and zoning laws, federal financial incentives, the construction workforce, and data collection and transparency. The Housing Action Plan highlights actions that the Biden administration and Congress have already taken to address the affordable housing crisis and outlines additional steps that must be taken to ensure everyone has access to safe, decent, affordable housing.

Read the press release at: <https://tinyurl.com/3cdxvdeb>

Read the Housing Action Plan at: <https://tinyurl.com/em4mmnt6>

Read a summary of the Housing Action Plan at: <https://tinyurl.com/3bjpx9dv>

Register for 4/9 Webinar on *Grants Pass v. Johnson* Supreme Court Case

NLIHC, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (The Alliance), and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) invite advocates nationwide to [register](#) for a webinar series on advancing solutions to the homelessness crisis. Join us for the first webinar, “The Supreme Court and the Criminalization of Homelessness,” on Tuesday, April 9, from 2 to 3 pm ET to hear from leading experts from the National Homelessness Law Center (NHLC), the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), and the Housing Narrative Lab about the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court case *City of Grants Pass, Oregon v. Johnson*, the most significant court case about the rights of people experiencing homelessness in decades.

Panelists on the webinar will include:

- Jesse Rabinowitz (NHLC)
- Donald Whitehead (NCH)
- Marisol Bello (Housing Narrative Lab)
- Steve Berg (The Alliance)
- Brooke Schipporeit (NLIHC)

NLIHC, NHLC, NCH, and the Alliance also invite advocates across the nation to participate in a National Week of Action starting on April 22 to oppose the criminalization of homelessness and advocate for real solutions to the affordable housing and homelessness crisis. Advocates can:

- Join national leaders, people with lived experience, and allies on the steps of the Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. on April 22 for a national event! [RSVP here](#).
- Use this [advocacy toolkit](#) – with key resources, including background information on the court case, advocacy tips, sample social media messages, and more – to plan an event during the week of April 22 in your local community!
- Participate in local rallies hosted by homelessness advocates. Local actions will be announced on www.johnsonvgrantsspass.com.

Last year, more than 13,400 people participated in our monthly Homelessness and Housing First [webinar series](#). Given the tremendous interest among stakeholders and the worsening homelessness and affordable housing crises, we decided to continue and expand the series to focus on the solutions to homelessness. On the webinars, we will share more about proven strategies to successfully end homelessness, best practices for state and local advocacy, and actions advocates can take to advance solutions.

Homelessness demands urgent action from all levels of government. We know what works to end homelessness: providing individuals with stable, accessible affordable housing and voluntary supportive services. We hope you will join us in building the political will and congressional support necessary to do so!

Please note that this webinar is not a training, and webinar attendees will not receive a certificate of completion.

Register for the webinar at: <https://tinyurl.com/2spa9f7b>

Disaster Recovery Housing

NLIHC Sends Letter Urging FEMA to Reinstate Reimbursement Policy for Pandemic-Era Non-Congregate Sheltering Programs in California

The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC) sent a [letter](#) on March 27 to FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell expressing deep concern regarding FEMA's decision to retroactively deny reimbursement under its Public Assistance (PA) program to the State of

California and multiple municipal governments for the operation of non-congregate sheltering during the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter submitted by the DHRC – a group comprising more than 900 national, state, and local organizations, including many working directly with disaster-impacted communities and with first-hand experience recovering after disasters – called on FEMA to reverse course and act in accordance with its reimbursement policy. The letter was undersigned by the National Alliance to End Homelessness, Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition, National Housing Law Project, Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies, Justice & Diversity Center of the Bar Association of San Francisco, Justice in Aging, and Fair Housing Advocates of Northern California.

In spring 2020, California relocated thousands of homeless individuals into hotels to safeguard them against COVID-19 on the assumption that FEMA would cover a significant portion of the expenses. However, following an unexpected reversal by FEMA, local cities and counties in the state now find themselves responsible for the hundreds of millions of dollars in costs they anticipated FEMA would absorb, putting additional strain on their already limited budgets.

While the letter commended FEMA’s initial support for non-congregate sheltering during the COVID-19 pandemic, it argues that by retroactively limiting eligibility, FEMA undermines the trust necessary to persuade state and local governments to rely on the agency’s stated commitments. The letter suggests that unless FEMA reverses its decision, localities will be less likely to use critical FEMA resources, even when this use is necessary to keep their residents safe during an emergency, for fear that FEMA may arbitrarily and retroactively change its policy.

Read the letter [here](#).

Disaster Housing Recovery Update – April 1, 2024

NLIHC joined the National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, Enterprise Community Partners, and 100 additional national, state, and local organizations on March 27 in submitting a [letter](#) to the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs urging the committee to include the [“Reforming Disaster Recovery Act”](#) (S.1686) in any bipartisan housing package.

The “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act” (RDRA) was introduced in the Senate on a firmly bipartisan basis by Senators Brian Schatz (D-HI), Susan Collins (R-ME), Patty Murray (D-WA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Jon Tester (D-MT), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Todd Young (R-IN), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Alex Padilla (D-CA). The bill was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in both 2019 and 2022.

Although other federal agencies have standing resources to quickly serve communities when disasters strike, Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds are only made available through special congressional approval. Due to the program’s lack of permanent authorization, HUD must write a new set of regulations to guide state and local

grantees each time it appropriates funds. This ad hoc system can delay funding for as long as three years after a disaster occurs. As a result, recovery timelines are lengthened, state and local economies stagnate, and homelessness and out-migration from disaster-impacted areas increase.

If enacted, the RDRA would permanently authorize HUD's CDBG-DR program, helping ensure that long-term disaster recovery funds are made quickly available after disasters and that all disaster survivors and their communities can fully and equitably recover.

Together with the other co-signing organizations, NLIHC reiterates its steadfast commitment to seeing this bipartisan legislation added to any package that advances in the Senate's Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee.

Congressional and National Updates

Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) [took](#) to the Senate floor on March 19 to highlight his disappointment that Congress had failed to support disaster survivors in Maui and across the country. "People on Maui and every other disaster-struck community are counting on us for support," Schatz said. "And it can't be that the federal government leaves them high and dry midway through the process of putting their lives back together, because we couldn't get some numbers to add up." He urged immediate action during forthcoming appropriations bill discussions, emphasizing that supporting disaster survivors must transcend partisan divides.

The [latest](#) data from the U.S. Census Bureau mirrors what researchers have also found: that households with the fewest resources, as well as those who have disabilities or who have been historically marginalized were more likely to be displaced from homes by disasters than others.

More than 44.8% of the country's homes face at least one kind of "severe or extreme [climate risk](#)" from either flood, wind, wildfire, heat or air quality, according to the 2024 Realtor.com Housing and Climate Risk Report. Realtor.com provides climate factor risk scores for properties, highlighting potential disaster risks over the next 30 years, using data from the First Street Foundation. Miami, New York, and Tampa face the highest flood risk by property value, while New Orleans has the highest percentage of property value at risk. For wind damage, Miami, Houston, and New York top the list, while in several cities in hurricane-prone states, all homes are exposed to extreme wind risk. Wildfire threats are highest in Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Francisco, with California cities also facing significant risks from severe heat and air quality issues. The total value of those homes is nearly \$22 trillion, according to the study.

In a March 12 Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs [hearing](#), "Examining Proposals to Address Housing Affordability, Availability and Other Community Needs," Matt Josephs, senior vice president of policy for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, urged Congress to support Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) to provide funding for low- to moderate-income communities, especially during disasters.

State and Local Updates

Florida

Funding provided to assist Hurricane Idalia recovery efforts via FEMA and other federal agencies has now [topped](#) \$820 million. More than 35,000 survivors have received assistance via FEMA, including 7,000 survivors who received rental assistance while repairs or rebuilding to their primary residence occurred. Idalia impacted the Florida Big Bend region as a Major Category 3 hurricane in mid-2023.

The commissioners of Lee County – which bore the brunt of Hurricane Ian’s impact in 2022 – have [approved](#) a roadmap for hurricane recovery and future resilience. Two hundred community members provided input on the plan, which was developed by the county’s Long-Term Recovery Task Force. The plan outlines 43 initiatives to assist Lee County in recovering and preparing for future disasters. Many residents of Lee County voiced concerns with the length of time it took for the plan to be released and ongoing housing issues in the area.

Hawaii

Hawaii authorities [announced](#) the launch of the Disaster Case Management Program for survivors of the Maui wildfires on March 19. The program, which is supported by FEMA but operated by several non-profit organizations, will assist disaster survivors with individualized assistance in navigating the ongoing disaster recovery progress. For perhaps the first time ever, FEMA and state officials stressed that case management services would be available to all individuals and households impacted by the Maui wildfires, not only those who are eligible for FEMA assistance and submitted applications. Thirty-six case managers across four community organizations will be hired.

The Hawaii Congressional delegation [announced](#) that it had successfully petitioned FEMA to open assistance to individuals who are citizens of Compacts of Free Association (COFA) countries on Maui who were impacted by the Maui wildfires following earlier questions about the legality of FEMA providing assistance to citizens of COFA countries, including the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia. While such residents do enjoy special immigration status, FEMA had determined that they were ineligible for assistance. Thanks to action from the Hawaii Congressional delegation, these residents will have access to federal assistance programs for the first time in decades.

More than 3,500 Lahaina fire survivors are currently housed in [hotels](#), facing a quickly approaching deadline when FEMA’s temporary sheltering program ends in four weeks. Efforts to move these survivors into longer-term housing through direct-lease contracts have been complicated by a shortage of available units and homeowners withdrawing their properties. Despite FEMA’s success in securing nearly 1,500 units, only a small number of eligible families have been placed, with the process being hindered by issues like pet acceptance, specific location demands, and the condition of offered units. Some homeowners have pulled out after signing leases, leaving some families without promised housing. FEMA aims to place 300 households per week, but progress has been slow. Other complications include property owners withdrawing, difficulties in meeting housing quality standards, and the unique challenges of Maui’s real estate market. FEMA and contracted property management companies have faced criticism for their handling of the situation, with calls for greater involvement of local property managers to address specific needs and expedite placements.

Maine

FEMA disaster recovery centers in Maine are [winding down](#) operations as an April 1 deadline for applications for FEMA assistance approaches. The centers, operating in Kennebec, Androscoggin, Franklin, Oxford, and Somerset counties, were opened in the wake of widespread power outages and severe flooding that struck the state in mid-December 2023

Michigan

Residents and business owners in Macomb County, as well as other affected areas, have until April 8 to apply for [federal disaster assistance](#) to address damages from severe storms that struck the county in August 2023. Over \$103.1 million in grants have already been distributed for home repairs, personal property replacement, and other needs stemming from storm damage. FEMA and the Small Business Association offer a range of assistance, including low-interest disaster loans. A disaster recovery center in Chesterfield Township is providing in-person support, though applications can also be submitted online or by phone.

Oregon

Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) is [launching](#) a new program to assist those impacted by the destructive 2020 wildfires in the state. The new Homeowner Assistance and Reconstruction Program will be available to those who lost homes in the Almeda and south Obenchain fires and are still in need of recovery assistance. Assistance will be available for repair, rebuilding, and replacement costs, as well as fixes for replacement homes.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro's new \$80 million budget [proposal](#) includes \$5 million toward a new program that would rehouse people after disasters and other emergencies when other forms of state and federal aid are not immediately available. The remaining funding would be used to fund public legal defense against evictions, as well as anti-homelessness initiatives and efforts to restart a popular home repair grant program.

Rhode Island

President Biden [declared](#) a Major Disaster for Rhode Island on March 21 following destructive storms and flooding in the state that occurred on December 17-19, 2023. The declaration makes federal assistance available to individual households in Kent, Providence, and Washington counties, as well as federal funding for hazard mitigation measures across the state. Individuals and business owners who sustained losses in the designated areas can begin applying for assistance by registering online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, by calling 1-800-621- 3362, or by using the [FEMA App](#). Those using a relay service, such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service, or other relay service, should provide FEMA with the number for that service.

West Virginia

Eight weeks after severe storms and flooding hit West Virginia, FEMA has [approved](#) over \$2 million in assistance for more than 600 affected households and businesses. FEMA’s assistance includes grants for essential home repairs, personal property replacement, and other serious needs, with 16 inspectors verifying damage across five eligible counties. Residents are encouraged to apply for aid through Disaster Recovery Centers or online.

HUD

HUD PIH Announces PHAs May Select Veterans for HUD-VASH Vouchers

HUD’s Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH) sent an [email](#) to public housing agency (PHA) directors on March 19 highlighting the ability of a PHA to voluntarily apply to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to serve as a Designated Service Provider (DSP) to issue HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers to veterans without first receiving referrals from the VA. As a DSP, a PHA must refer a veteran to the VA for case management and must provide temporary case management until a VA medical center (VAMC) has completed intake of the veteran. By volunteering to serve as DSPs (without additional PIH funds), PHAs may be able to help homeless veterans more quickly move into stable, affordable housing.

In general, the HUD-VASH program combines HUD Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) for homeless veterans with case management and supportive services provided through a VAMC or DSP approved by the VA – typically a Continuum of Care (CoC)-funded service provider already working with homeless veterans. Typically, the VA refers veterans to a PHA to issue HUD-VASH vouchers, while the VA provides ongoing services for veterans at VAMCs and community-based outreach clinics (CBOCs).

A PIH email sent by Richard Monocchio, PIH principal deputy assistant secretary, includes a [link](#) to a VA webpage that contains links through which a PHA can apply to the VA for DSP status.

Read the March 19 PIH email at: <https://tinyurl.com/2rx6uzmt>

Read the VA “[Public Housing Agencies as HUD-VASH Designated Service Providers](#)” webpage.

Read the VA “[HUD-VASH Collaborative Case Management with Designated Service Provider Application Process](#)” webpage.

More information about HUD-VASH vouchers is on [page 4-31](#) of NLIHC’s *2024 Advocates’ Guide*.

HUD Recap Office Announces Availability of RAD Resident Fact Sheets in Six Additional Languages

HUD's Office of Recapitalization (Recap) has posted Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) [Resident Fact Sheets](#) in six additional languages, supplementing the Resident Fact Sheets already available in English and Spanish (see *Memo*, [2/7/22](#) and [2/22/22](#)). The newly translated fact sheets are in Korean, Vietnamese, French, Haitian Creole, Chinese, and Russian and include "Overview of Resident Rights after a RAD Conversion," "Resident Engagement and Consultation," "Resident Organizing and Funding," as well as 12 other fact sheets.

Recap has also redesigned the resident-oriented RAD webpages. One page, "[What is RAD?](#)," now includes a link to a [five-minute video](#) in English and Spanish, a link to a redesigned electronic [complaint or inquiry form](#), and short responses to five frequently asked questions. Also on this page are links to:

- A [RAD Information Notice](#) (RIN) template for public housing agencies to use to notify residents of required meetings to discuss a public housing authority's (PHA) RAD plans and residents right to information, right to relocation assistance if necessary, and right to return after redevelopment.
- A webinar summarizing [resident engagement provisions](#) in the 2023 changes to the [RAD Notice Revision 4 as amended by RAD Supplemental Notice 4B](#).
- A [40-page guidebook](#) about residents' ability to move from their RAD property with a Housing Choice Voucher after one year if their property was converted to Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) or after two years if their property was converted to Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA).
- A link to the [15 Resident Fact Sheets](#).

The other redesigned page, "[RAD Public Housing Residents](#)," repeats much of what is on the "What is RAD?" page, adding a link to a video describing [resident protections and engagement](#) and "Resources" such as the "[Rental Assistance Demonstration – Supplemental Notice 4B](#)" from July 27, 2023, and the "[Fair Housing, Civil Rights, and Relocation Notice](#)" (Notice H 2016-17/PIH 2016-17). Various "Tools" are offered, including webinars discussing "[RAD 101 – Public Housing Conversions](#)" and "[Section 3](#)," as well as a five-page "[Guidance for Successful Implementation of Rental Assistance Demonstration \(RAD\) Choice-Mobility](#)." Finally, the pages includes an email address for contacting Recap staff: rad@hud.gov.

Find the RAD homepage at: <https://www.hud.gov/RAD>

More information about RAD is on [page 4-50](#) of NLIHC's *2024 Advocates' Guide* and on NLIHC's [Public Housing webpage](#).

Research

NLIHC Releases RFP for Survey Research Partner

NLIHC has released a [Request for Proposals](#) (RFP) for a technical partner with expertise in survey design and implementation to assist with a new NLIHC National Renter Survey. Read the RFP [here](#).

Much of what is known about renters in the U.S. comes from national datasets like the American Housing Survey, Census Household Pulse Survey, and American Community Survey. While these resources provide considerable detail on topics like rental housing quality, rent costs, and renter demographics, they include only limited information on renters' experiences and opinions. A reliable, nationally representative source of quantitative data on the common barriers renters face to remaining safely and stably housed in their communities of choice would be an invaluable resource for informing advocacy efforts and identifying effective policy interventions.

Over the next two years, NLIHC will address this information gap by conducting a nationally representative survey of renters. The primary goal of this survey is to supplement existing data sources by gathering new, actionable data to inform our advocacy on federal policies that affect renters.

NLIHC is seeking a research firm, consultant, or academic institution with the experience and expertise to collaborate with our research team on activities including but not limited to:

- Determining the appropriate sample size, sample frame, and weighting strategy for the survey.
- Validating and/or conducting cognitive testing on the survey instrument.
- Administering the survey instrument to a nationally representative sample of renters.
- Providing the final survey dataset(s) to NLIHC.

All proposals and required documents must be submitted to Sarah Abdelhadi (sabdelhadi@nlihc.org) **no later than 5 pm ET on Friday, April 19**. Questions about the RFP should be submitted to Sarah by **Wednesday, April 10**.

The RFP is available at: https://bit.ly/nlihc_rfp_renter_survey

New GAO Report Highlights Challenges in Collecting Federal Data on Evictions

A report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), "[Evictions: National Data Are Limited and Challenging to Collect](#)," explores the complexities and obstacles underlying the creation of a national resource for eviction data, a proposal that has gained traction in Congress over the last five years. The report builds on a [2021 study](#) conducted by HUD at the request of Congress exploring the viability of a national evictions database. The new report finds that despite considerable advances over the past decade, attempts to generate national estimates of eviction prevalence by compiling eviction case records from civil courts or conducting surveys have fallen short. The report offers recommendations for policymakers to consider before pursuing plans for a federal eviction data collection effort.

As part of the report, the GAO completed a literature review to learn more about existing sources of quantitative data on evictions and the characteristics of tenants and landlords involved in the eviction process. It also interviewed staff from federal agencies like HUD and the U.S. Census Bureau, state and local court officials, public housing authority staff, and members of research and housing advocacy organizations involved in eviction-related work, including NLIHC. A

recurring theme throughout the report is the difficulty of capturing information on both formal evictions, which follow a legal process within the civil court system, and informal evictions, which occur outside of the court system and include both legal and illegal activities resulting in forced displacement of tenants.

At the time of publication, there were three main public sources for national data on evictions collected from civil court records: Eviction Lab, Legal Services Corporation (LSC), and the Court Statistics Project. While each of these initiatives uses somewhat different approaches to collect, standardize, analyze, and report on eviction court data, staff interviews with the GAO reveal that each shares the same barriers to producing robust and reliable eviction statistics. Most importantly, formal eviction is a highly localized process that operates within a network of overlapping state, county, and local laws, as well as court rules. Not only does the eviction process itself vary from one court to another, but the content, quality, and organization of information documented in case records also varies widely from court to court. Indeed, many courts systems use antiquated electronic court records systems that do not facilitate web-based data sharing, and some courts do not use digital case management systems at all. Furthermore, by definition, these initiatives are unable to capture information on informal evictions, which occur outside of the civil court system from which data are derived. Civil court records rarely contain demographic information on the landlords and tenants involved in cases, complicating efforts to learn more about the characteristics of households impacted by eviction. Moreover, the vast and complex nature of the U.S. civil court system makes data collection and management at the national level expensive, time-consuming, and labor-intensive.

The report explains that national surveys can be used to efficiently produce more comprehensive eviction prevalence estimates but are limited in other ways. The Census Bureau's American Housing Survey (AHS) and Household Pulse Survey (Pulse) recently began to include questions on respondents' experiences with eviction and other forced moves. Unlike record-based efforts conducted by eviction courts, these surveys allow for the collection of demographic information on households affected by eviction, as well as data on informal evictions. However, the report acknowledges that the phrasing and structure of survey questions – particularly the manner in which eviction or other forms of displacement are defined – can limit their utility in contributing to national estimates of eviction prevalence. In addition, although estimates gleaned from these surveys have been validated in certain locations (e.g., New York City) using local surveys, some officials have expressed concerns that the surveys may be undercounting evictions due to their relatively small sample size and the difficulty in accessing populations at greatest risk for eviction, such as extremely low-income renters, renters with limited English proficiency, and undocumented or mixed-status households.

Interviewees provided GAO with recommendations to consider when planning for a federal eviction data collection effort. First and foremost, they emphasized that any such effort should be goal-oriented and maintain clear objectives, such as generating data to target eviction-related resources to the areas of greatest need, measuring the impact of eviction-related policies, supporting the enforcement of "Fair Housing Act" provisions, and facilitating the linking of eviction data to other datasets from agencies like HUD. The interviewees also noted that establishing standardized definitions and terminology is critical to ensure that any estimates produced are reliable and generalizable. Many interviewees admitted that creating a national database of eviction court records would be challenging and highlighted the need for additional

funding and technical training for state and local civil court staff to improve their electronic court systems before a national effort would be feasible. They noted that investing in enhancements to existing national surveys could be a more cost-efficient way to improve data quality.

In concluding the report, GAO explains that both approaches to data collection are vital for producing useful information on eviction. “[A] court record database could provide more authoritative reporting of formal eviction filings to target eviction-related resources,” writes the agency, “while an enhanced survey could help improve understanding of the national eviction landscape and tenant demographics.”

Read the article at: <https://bit.ly/3xf1S1g>

Our Homes, Our Votes

***Our Homes, Our Votes* Updates – April 1, 2024**

NLIHC’s *Our Homes, Our Votes* campaign is a nonpartisan initiative to boost voter turnout among low-income renters and elevate housing as an election issue. As the 2024 election season approaches, *Our Homes, Our Votes* will provide regular updates about the intersection of housing justice and nonpartisan civic engagement in *Memo to Members & Partners*. To learn more about *Our Homes, Our Votes*, visit www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org.

Register for the *Our Homes, Our Votes*: 2024 Webinar Series

A new *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2024* biweekly webinar series will provide resources, guidance, and inspiration for organizations and individuals seeking to launch or strengthen their own nonpartisan voter and candidate engagement initiatives. The series will launch on Monday, April 15, at 2:30 pm ET, with a special kickoff webinar featuring Diane Yentel, president and CEO of NLIHC; Dr. Bambie Hayes-Brown, president and CEO of Georgia Advancing Communities Together; Courtney Cooperman, project manager of *Our Homes, Our Votes*; and a special message from Representative Nikema Williams (D-GA), lead sponsor of the “Unhoused VOTE Act.” Register for the webinar series [here](#)!

The *Our Homes, Our Votes: 2024* kickoff webinar will provide an overview of the connection between housing justice and political participation, the effectiveness of nonpartisan voter engagement campaigns, and why housing and homelessness advocates should get involved in the 2024 election cycle. To preview the full series agenda, visit www.ourhomes-ourvotes.org/webinars-2024.

Become a National Voter Registration Day Community Partner!

National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) is a nonpartisan civic holiday that activates nonprofits, campuses, businesses, and other organizations to register voters in their communities. The holiday reaches tens of thousands of voters each year and has registered more than 5 million voters to date since its launch in 2012. NVRD will take place on Tuesday, September 17, 2024.

[Sign up to become an NVRD Community Partner](#) to receive complimentary posters and stickers, digital assets, and updates about NVRD events and grant opportunities.

Community partners agree to stay nonpartisan in all promotion of the event and voter registration activities. [Click here](#) for the community partner signup form.

New Research from Nonprofit VOTE Demonstrates Impact of Nonpartisan Voter Engagement

Nonprofit VOTE, a nonpartisan organization that helps nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services, released the 2024 edition of its “Nonprofit Power: Building an Inclusive Democracy” report. The report found that voters who were engaged by nonprofits in the 2022 midterm elections saw a 10 percentage-point boost in voter turnout relative to comparable voters that were not engaged by nonprofits. For historically disenfranchised and underrepresented communities, that voter turnout boost is even greater.

Low-income voters earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 saw the largest turnout boost of all demographic groups, with voter turnout rates 15 percentage points higher than rates for comparable low-income voters that were not engaged by nonprofits. People of color engaged by nonprofits saw a 12 percentage-point increase in voter turnout, and young people engaged by nonprofits saw a 14 percentage-point increase in voter turnout.

Nonprofits are well-positioned to reach voters that are most likely to be overlooked by political campaigns and underrepresented in the democratic process. Clients engaged by participating nonprofits were 2.5 times more likely to earn less than \$20,000 compared to overall registered voters, 2.4 times more likely to be people of color, and 1.3 times more likely to be young voters between the ages of 18 and 24 years old.

The “Nonprofit Power” report analyzed the voter file records of approximately 7,000 voters reached through Nonprofit VOTE’s multistate field program in the 2022 midterm elections. Three NLIHC state partners (COHHIO, Virginia Housing Alliance, and Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania) served as regional anchor organizations in the multistate field program, which mobilized 120 nonprofits to collectively reach more than 60,000 voters across nine states.

Learn more about the Nonprofit Power report at: www.nonprofitvote.org/nonprofit-power-report/

Brennan Center for Justice Highlights Growing Racial Disparities in Voter Turnout

[New research](#) from the Brennan Center for Justice shows that the difference in voter turnout between white and non-white voters, known as the racial voter turnout gap, has grown consistently since 2012. In every region of the country, the racial turnout gap in the 2022 midterm election was larger than any midterm since at least 2006. White Americans voted at higher rates than non-white Americans in every state but Hawaii in the 2022 midterm elections. Racial turnout gaps exist within every income quartile and across all levels of education. The racial turnout gap is growing most quickly in regions affected by the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision *Shelby County v. Holder*, which rolled back key provisions of the “Voting Rights Act of 1965” and paved the way for voter suppression policies that disproportionately impact voters of color.

Shelby County dismantled Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which required states and localities with a history of racially discriminatory voting practices to receive federal preclearance before making any changes to their policies. In the decade since the Supreme Court suspended preclearance, states formerly covered under Section 5 have enacted dozens of laws that make voting more difficult. The Brennan Center’s report finds that the overall white-nonwhite turnout gap grew about four points larger in counties formerly covered by preclearance, and the white-Black turnout gap grew about five points large in these counties, than they would have grown if preclearance were still in effect.

To read the full report, visit: www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/growing-racial-disparities-voter-turnout-2008-2022

From the Field

Join Today’s (4/1) “Tenant Talk Live” on Legislative Advocacy for Tenant Protections

Join NLIHC’s “Tenant Talk Live,” a meeting geared towards tenant and resident leaders, today, April 1, at 6 pm ET. As legislative sessions wrap up nationwide, advocates for tenant protections are ready to share the insights they have gained during their advocacy journey. In this month’s “Tenant Talk Live,” attendees will have the opportunity to hear from Mindy Woods, a member of both the Resident Action Project (RAP) and the NLIHC Board of Directors. Mindy will share her firsthand experiences advocating during Washington State’s recent legislative session and discuss the ongoing struggle for tenant protections in her state and the path forward for RAP and tenant organizers across the country. [Register here](#) to join today’s “Tenant Talk Live.”

Mindy Woods is a Desert Storm navy veteran and single mother. She draws on her own and her son’s lived experiences of homelessness, poverty, and other challenges to lift up her community. Mindy serves on multiple boards and commissions in the State of Washington, as well as on a national board, and works as the human services program manager for the City of Edmonds, a position she pushed to create. She is a founding member of Washington State’s Resident Action Project, a statewide, resident-led network of people who have experienced housing insecurity and injustice and who organize and use civic engagement, education, and storytelling to bring about policy change. Mindy approaches all her work with an eye toward equity, and she is a tireless housing and social justice organizer who believes that everyone should have access to an affordable, safe, and healthy place to live in a thriving community of their choice.

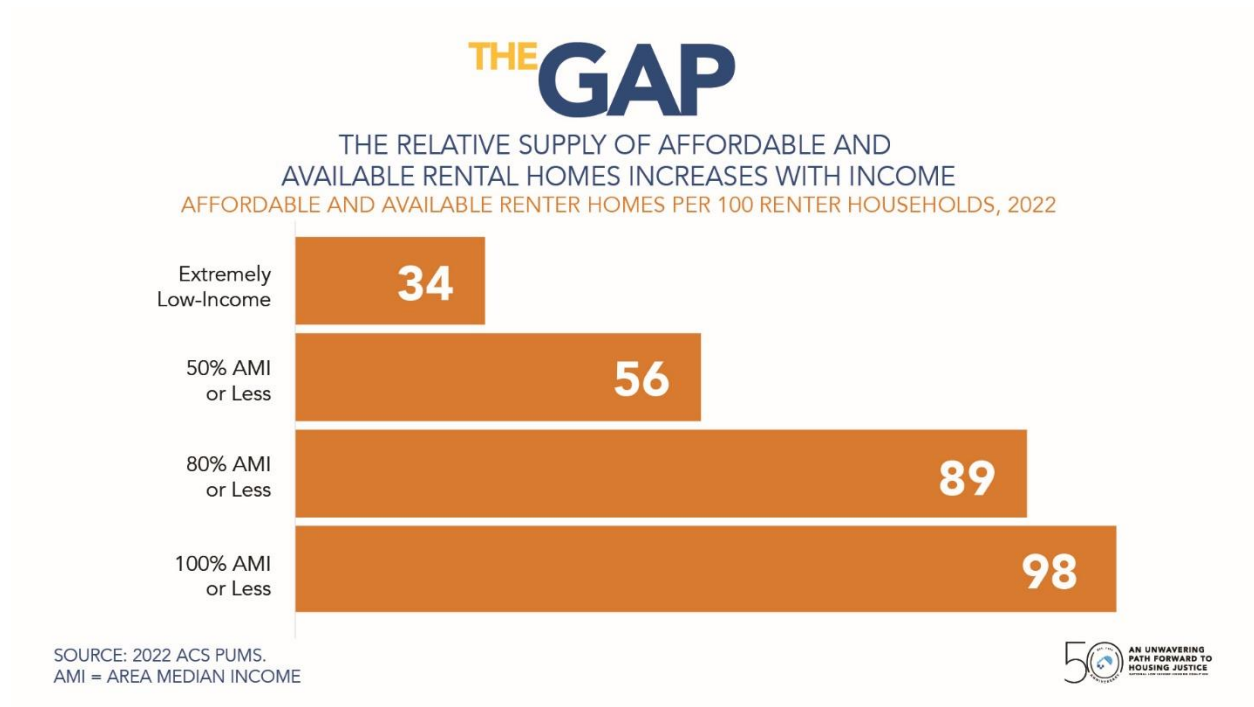
“Tenant Talk Live” meetings are held the first Monday of every month at 6 pm ET. If you are unable to attend Monday’s meeting you can view upcoming or past Tenant Talk Live recordings at our [working group webpage](#). To stay up to date on “Tenant Talk Live” events and connect with other attendees, join the [Tenant Talk Facebook group](#).

Do you have topics or ideas for future Tenant Talk Live meetings? **Please submit your ideas through our [semi-annual Tenant Talk Live Feedback survey](#) by the extended deadline of April 5, 2024.**

Meetings like “Tenant Talk Live” also depend on the support of our members. Become an NLIHC member [here!](#)

Fact of the Week

Only 34 Affordable and Available Rental Homes Exist for Every 100 Extremely Low-Income Renters



Source: 2022 ACS PUMS

AMI = Area Median Income

NLIHC Careers

NLIHC Seeks Housing Advocacy Coordinator/Organizer

NLIHC seeks a housing advocacy coordinator/organizer (depending on experience) who will be responsible for building relationships around the country, mobilizing advocates to take action on NLIHC’s federal policy priorities and campaign efforts, and maintaining and expanding NLIHC membership with individuals and organizations. The housing advocacy coordinator/organizer will report to the director of field organizing.

Responsibilities:

- Build and maintain relationships with NLIHC state and tribal partners, members, people directly impacted by housing instability and homelessness, and other housing and homelessness advocates and service providers.
- Conduct outreach to maintain and expand NLIHC's membership with individuals and organizations through monthly mailings, emails, and phone calls.
- Mobilize NLIHC's network of advocates to take action on federal affordable housing policy issues.
- Present at meetings and conferences in D.C. and around the country to share NLIHC's research, policy priorities, and how advocates can get engaged in NLIHC's work.
- Respond to requests for information from NLIHC state and tribal partners, members, the media, and the public.
- Track field activity in assigned region and promote activities of NLIHC's network, especially state and tribal partners and members, through NLIHC's communication platforms.
- Create and maintain advocacy tools in collaboration with the Policy Team, such as NLIHC's Legislative Action Center, advocacy toolkits, how-to tutorials, sample emails and phone call scripts, and sign-on letters.
- Contribute to field communications, including NLIHC's weekly e-newsletters *Memo to Members and Partners* and *The Connection*, calls to action and other eblasts, website pages and materials, blog posts, social media, and NLIHC's *Tenant Talk* publication.
- Maintain contact database in Salesforce and other platforms. Produce membership reports and lists as needed to support the work of NLIHC.
- Identify and cultivate potential new state and tribal partners in places where NLIHC seeks to build a stronger base of advocates.
- Support planning and implementation of NLIHC's annual Housing Policy Forum, including speaker recruitment and organizing participants of Capitol Hill Day.
- Participate in NLIHC staff meetings, staff training, monthly state and tribal partner Zoom meetings, and other meetings as assigned.
- Other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

- The housing advocacy coordinator will hold a bachelor's degree (master's degree preferred) and have up to two years of experience in policy advocacy, community or macro organizing, membership coordination, or direct assistance to low-income communities. People with lived experience of housing instability or homelessness who hope to shape housing policy at a national level and who have experience in lieu of a degree are encouraged to apply.
- The housing advocacy organizer will hold a master's degree and have at least two years of work experience in policy advocacy, community or macro organizing, membership coordination, or direct assistance to low-income communities. Candidates with an additional three years of work experience in lieu of a master's degree will be considered.
- Candidates should have the ability to work in a diverse, fast-paced environment; strong organizational skills; oral and interpersonal communication skills; networking skills; writing skills; and attention to detail.
- Strong commitment to social, racial, and housing justice and knowledge of the fundamentals of affordable housing or homelessness.

- Demonstrated ability to cultivate positive relationships with marginalized individuals, including those with lived experiences with housing insecurity and homelessness.
- Demonstrated experience and ability to recognize and respond to the ways race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity intersect to further promote racial equity and social justice.
- Ability to travel to speaking engagements several times a year.
- Proficiency in the Microsoft Office suite and Zoom. Familiarity with Salesforce, Mailchimp, GiveSmart, or Phone2Action a plus.

An equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, NLIHC offers a competitive benefits package. These are full-time positions located in Washington, D.C. on hybrid work schedules. The housing advocacy coordinator salary range is \$67,000-\$90,000 (depending on experience). The housing advocacy organizer salary range is \$87,000-\$102,000 (depending on experience).

How to Apply:

Interested candidates should submit a resume, cover letter, and two writing samples to Sarah Saadian, senior vice president of public policy and field organizing, and Brooke Schipporeit, director of field organizing, at: ssaadian@nlihc.org and bschipporeit@nlihc.org

NLIHC Seeks Data Systems Coordinator

NLIHC seeks a data systems coordinator to ensure effective and efficient organization-wide use of Salesforce, related data, and integrated platforms to support the organization's fundraising, membership, and advocacy initiatives and boost staff and organization efficiency and productivity. The data systems coordinator reports to the director of operations and works collaboratively with all Salesforce users across the organization.

Responsibilities:

- Manage day-to-day administration of the Salesforce Nonprofit CRM, supporting 10+ users across several teams.
- Strategize with teams about the most effective use of data systems and make database customizations to streamline workflows, making Salesforce the central hub for the organization.
- Oversee integrations between Salesforce and other platforms – including Mailchimp, GiveSmart, Phone2Action, and Zoom – using declarative API services (like Zapier) and other solutions.
- Customize Salesforce objects, fields, flows, and lists.
- Build custom reports, forms/surveys, and dashboards specific to job functions.
- Generate process maps for workflows related to membership, donations, grants, and events.
- Manage data integrity, data reporting and dashboards, and standard data processes within the system.

- Conduct data audits, update required information, and eliminate duplicate and/or outdated records.
- Maintain control of access rights, security settings, and user privileges.
- Provide organization-wide training on the importance of Salesforce as a central hub for the organization and how staff work is connected, including non-CRM users. Provide additional training to CRM users and meet regularly to discuss best practices and troubleshoot issues.
- Serve as liaison to all vendor solutions.
- Identify opportunities for growth and understand how to make those changes happen.
- Stay abreast of new platform features and determine value to organization, update database, and train staff as appropriate.
- Explore future options for vendors as necessary.
- Coordinate future special projects, including integration of Salesforce with Sage Intacct Accounting software and managing email operations related to building email subscriber lists and segments of contacts.
- Other duties as assigned.

Qualifications:

This is a full-time position in Washington, DC. Applicants must have a strong commitment to social justice and NLIHC's mission. Other requirements include:

- Bachelor's degree, or equivalent combination of education and experience.
- Minimum two years' experience supporting Salesforce, preferably in a non-profit environment, with experience creating and managing flows, donor records, revenue tracking, campaigns, custom objects, and the integration of other platforms.
- Strong project management, data management, and training and support skills.
- Strong written and oral communication skills.
- Strong computer and technical skills, including advanced MS Excel Skills.
- Ability to develop strong relationships and effectively work with individuals across all levels and departments.
- Effective time management, organization, and leadership skills.
- People-oriented person with customer-service approach to supporting colleagues who can work collaboratively to understand/address data-related concerns of various teams.
- Resourceful and willing to learn, constantly thinking and learning about innovation and process.
- Ability to be innovative, identify areas of improvement, and grow and change as the organization changes.

An equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, NLIHC offers a competitive salary and a generous benefits package. The salary range for this position is \$67,000 to \$90,000.

How to Apply:

Send a cover letter and resume to: Director of Operations Lakesha Dawson (NLIHC, 1000 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005) at ldawson@nlihc.org. The cover

letter should describe the candidate’s interest in and relevant experiences for the position and include salary requirements. Please also include names and contact information for at least three people serving as candidate references. (NLIHC will not contact references before consulting with the candidate.)

NLIHC in the News

NLIHC in the News for the Weeks of March 17 and 24

The following are some of the news stories to which NLIHC contributed during the weeks of March 17 and 24:

- “Micro-apartments are back after nearly a century, as need for affordable housing soars” *AP*, March 21 at: <https://tinyurl.com/492xvh2p>
 - “Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders relaunch Green New Deal for housing” *The Hill*, March 21 at: <https://tinyurl.com/2ry4rj57>
 - “Advocates Say Biden Missed an Opportunity to Address Homelessness in SOTU” *Invisible People*, March 19 at: <https://tinyurl.com/3tvcts24>
 - “Biden seeks to reinvigorate diverse coalition in critical 2024 campaign swing out West” *CNN*, March 19 at: <https://tinyurl.com/yuamyyru>
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NLIHC News

Where to Find Us – April 1

- [South Central Climate Resilience Forum](#) – Dallas, TX, April 2 (Noah Patton)
 - [“Renting the American Dream,” CHCI Capitol Hill Policy Briefing Series](#) – Washington, D.C., April 9 (Sid Betancourt)
 - “Justice and Housing in America” course, Binghamton University – Virtual, April 10 (Lindsay Duvall)
 - Columbia Business School – New York, NY, April 17 (Diane Yentel)
 - [Feeding America Annual Conference](#) – Las Vegas, NV, April 18 (Chantelle Wilkinson)
 - [2024 National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Conference](#) – Phoenix, AZ, May 6 (Noah Patton)
 - The Housing Ohio Conference – Columbus, OH, May 7-8 (Diane Yentel; Courtney Cooperman)
 - [2024 National Mass Care Exercise](#) – Shippensburg, PA, May 23 (Noah Patton)
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NLIHC Staff

Sarah Abdelhadi, Senior Research Analyst

Lindsey Aramah, Communications Intern
Andrew Aurand, Senior Vice President for Research, x245
Sidney Betancourt, Project Manager, Inclusive Community Engagement, x200
Victoria Bourret, Project Manager, State and Local Innovation, x244
Jen Butler, Vice President, External Affairs, x239
Alayna Calabro, Senior Policy Analyst, x252
Matthew Clarke, Director, Communications, x207
Courtney Cooperman, Project Manager, Our Homes Our Votes, x263
Lindsay Duvall, Senior Organizer for Housing Advocacy, x206
Dan Emmanuel, Manager, Research, x316
Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, x314
Sarah Gallagher, Vice President, State and Local Policy Innovation, x220
Raquel Harati, Research Analyst
Danita Humphries, Senior Executive Assistant, x226
Nada Hussein, ERASE Project Coordinator, x264
Kim Johnson, Public Policy Manager, x243
Kayla Laywell, Housing Policy Analyst, x231
Mayerline Louis-Juste, Senior Communications Specialist, x201
Steve Moore Sanchez, Development Coordinator, x209
Khara Norris, Vice President of Operations and Finance, x242
Noah Patton, Manager, Disaster Recovery, x227
Mackenzie Pish, Research Analyst
Ikra Rafi, Creative Services Manager, x246
Benja Reilly, Development Specialist, x234
Dee Ross, Tenant Leader Fellow
Gabrielle Ross, Project Manager, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, x208
Sarah Saadian, Senior Vice President for Public Policy and Field Organizing, x228
Brooke Schipporeit, Director, Field Organizing, x233
Lauren Steimle, Web/Graphic Design Specialist, x246
Julie Walker, OSAH Campaign Coordinator
Chantelle Wilkinson, OSAH Campaign Director, x230
Renee Willis, Senior Vice President for Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, x247
Diane Yentel, President and CEO, x225