Volume 30, Issue 8 March 3, 2025

#### HUD

- Join Today's Hands Off Housing Event at HUD Headquarters!
- Take Action Now to Protect Vital HUD Programs and Staff!

### **Budget and Appropriations**

- White House Sends "Anomalies" List to Congress as Republican Leaders Push for Full-Year Continuing Resolution Take Action!
- House Votes to Adopt Blueprint for Massive Bill to Slash Medicaid and SNAP Funding, Extend Tax Cuts Primarily Benefiting High-Income Households and Corporations

#### **Congress**

- Senate Democrats Demand Answers on HUD's "DOGE" Task Force and Potential Housing Cuts
- Ranking Member Maxine Waters Demands Oversight Hearing on HUD's DOGE Task Force and Housing Cuts

# **Affordable Housing Supply**

 NLIHC Submits Statement for House Financial Services Committee Hearing on Housing Supply

#### **State and Local Innovation**

• Recap of 2/25 State and Local Innovation Campaign's "Strengthening Renters' Rights: A Primer on 'Just Cause' Protections" Webinar

# **Fair Housing**

• HUD Releases Weakened AFFH Interim Final Rule, Sen. Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Waters (D-CA) Condemn Secretary Turner for Allowing Housing Discrimination

#### **Public Resource**

- NHLP Launches Story Bank to Fight Back Against the Trump Administration
- PIF Hosts Webinar on Congressional Threats to Immigrant Families and Benefits in Reconciliation

# **Disaster Housing Recovery**

- Report from Harvard Law Program Calls into Question Administration's Ability to Eliminate FEMA
- The Government Accountability Office Issues Unprecedented Warning on the State of the U.S. Disaster Recovery System; Recommends Permanent Authorization of HUD Disaster Program

## **Opportunity Starts at Home**

• OSAH Campaign Releases Updated Fact Sheets on Connections between Housing and Disability Rights, Food Access, and Homelessness

#### Research

 Renter, Low Income, and Nonwhite Households Are More Likely to Lack Access to Air Conditioning

#### Fact of the Week

 Metropolitan Renters Have More Limited Access to Central Air Conditioning than Owners

#### From the Field

• Today's (3/3) "Tenant Talk Live" Rescheduled! Tune into Hands off Housing event instead!

#### **NLIHC Careers**

• NLIHC Seeks Director of Communications

#### **NLIHC News**

- NLIHC in the News February 24
- Where to Find Us March 3

#### HUD

### Join Today's Hands Off Housing Event at HUD Headquarters!

#### TAG: HUD

Keywords: HUD, DOGE

NLIHC invites all organizations, advocates, and supporters to attend a press event to protect vital HUD programs and staff, today, March 3 at 5 pm ET, at HUD headquarters (451 7th St SW, Washington, DC 20410).

House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA) and other congressional leaders will join the event and hand-deliver a letter to HUD Secretary Scott Turner, demanding answers about DOGE's efforts to terminate half of all HUD staff, freeze federal investments in affordable housing, community developments, homelessness, and more.

#### We ask that all attendees arrive promptly at 4:30 pm ET.

To send a clear message that HUD staff, programs, and investments play a critical role in addressing our nation's most pressing challenges, we urgently encourage advocates to:

- Attend in person and bring as many staff, members, and partners as possible;
- Make and bring signs showcasing your support for affordable housing and opposition to these devastating cuts; and
- Amplify the message by mobilizing your networks to stand with us.

# If you are unable to attend in person, please tune into a livestream of the event at: <a href="https://bit.ly/4bnyxBw">https://bit.ly/4bnyxBw</a>.

At a time when housing costs are far out of reach for renters and homelessness has reached an all-time high, federal investments in affordable housing and homelessness solutions are critically needed.

Join today's event to demand that DOGE halt their attempts to decimate HUD, undermine housing justice, and worsen America's housing and homelessness crisis!

### Take Action Now to Protect Vital HUD Programs and Staff!

#### TAG: HUD

Keywords: HoUSed, HUD, DOGE

Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) propose to **terminate at least half of all HUD employees.** If such deep staff cuts occur, it will be significantly more difficult for states and communities to access needed federal housing, community development, and homelessness investments. **Take action!** 

#### Advocates must act urgently to protect HUD!

- <u>Tell members of Congress</u> why HUD resources are critical to low-income families and communities and urge your representatives to protect HUD programs and staff.
- Add your organization to a national sign-on letter to protect HUD from Elon Musk and DOGE! Threats to HUD staffing and programs would be detrimental to communities across the country.
- Join us for a national press event on Monday, March 3 at 5 pm ET at HUD headquarters! House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA) and other congressional leaders will join the event and hand-deliver a letter to HUD Secretary Scott Turner, demanding answers about DOGE's efforts to fire half of all HUD staff, freeze federal investments, and more. Join us to show solidarity and send a powerful, public message: HUD staff, programs, and investments are essential to tackling our nation's housing and homelessness crises!
- Join us for a National Day of Action on March 10 to demand Congress stand up to Elon Musk and DOGE and protect HUD! Contact your senators and representatives, post on social media, or hold events in your local community to raise awareness of DOGE's efforts to decimate HUD.

#### **Background**

HUD is a key federal agency dedicated to addressing the most pressing housing, community development, and homelessness challenges in the U.S. and serves millions of renters, homeowners, and people experiencing homelessness. Terminating at least half of all HUD employees would be detrimental to communities across the country: shelters will close, federally funded home and community center construction will halt, households receiving rental assistance will face immediate rent increases or evictions, victims of discrimination will not be assisted, and communities impacted by disasters will not be able to rebuild.

Termination of HUD employees will diminish access to key federal resources used to:

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

At a time when housing costs are far out of reach for renters and homelessness has reached an all-time high, now is the time to strengthen federal investments in affordable housing and homelessness solutions.

In late January, the Trump Administration directed all federal agencies, including HUD, to withhold all federal assistance investments – including essential HUD funds. After enormous pressure from advocates and congressional champions, the Administration rescinded its directive

after 48 hours. Now, President Trump is attempting to decimate HUD by terminating critically needed staff.

# **Budget and Appropriations**

White House Sends "Anomalies" List to Congress as Republican Leaders Push for Full-Year Continuing Resolution – Take Action!

### TAG: Federal Budget & Appropriations

*Keywords: FY25, appropriations* 

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) and Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) instructed appropriators to begin putting together the text of a year-long continuing resolution (CR) that would fund the federal government until September 30, the end of fiscal year (FY) 2025. CRs maintain the previous year's level of appropriated funding for a period; in this case, the year-long CR would essentially allow appropriators to forgo finalizing FY25 negotiations and begin work on FY26. The federal government is currently operating under a CR, slated to expire March 14. Without another spending plan in place, the federal government will be forced into a partial shutdown.

Because CRs maintain level funding from the previous fiscal year, and because the cost of housing rises every year, long-term CRs act as a cut, reducing the number of people and communities served by HUD's vital affordable housing and homelessness programs. However, under a full-year CR, the White House may also request that Congress provide certain programs with "anomalies," or funding increases tacked on to the level funding provided through the CR. The White House sent a <u>list of recommended anomalies</u> to Congress on January 27, which included increased funding requests for limited HUD programs:

- Homeless Assistance Grants: \$259 million "for new projects to renew CoC projects in 2025," while continuing to fund ESG at \$290 million.
- Rural Development Mission Area Programs: \$34 million that "must be transferred to the Rental Assistance Grants to renew all existing 2025 contracts."
- Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA): \$893 million to maintain current services.
- Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA; includes the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program): \$3.65 billion to maintain current services.

While the bill text of the year-long CR has yet to be released, depending on bill language, the proposed \$3.65 billion increase to TBRA funding could be sufficient to cover the full cost of renewing all existing HCV contracts. NLIHC and our partners have been <u>raising the alarm for months</u> among advocates and members of Congress about the potential shortfall in HCV renewal funding – the Senate FY25 draft bill <u>proposed</u> a \$2.9 billion increase to HCV funding, and the House FY25 bill would have <u>provided</u> a paltry \$115 million increase. According to an <u>analysis</u> from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), if enacted, the Senate bill would result in around 62,000 fewer households (about 141,000 fewer people) receiving rental assistance,

while the House bill would cost almost 283,000 households (nearly 645,000 people) their housing voucher. This would represent the largest loss of vouchers since the program's creation.

Moreover, under the confines of the "Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023," without a final FY25 agreement the federal budget may be subject to "sequestration," or mandatory, across-the-board spending cuts across federal programs. However, sequestration would disproportionately hit the defense side of the federal budget, which would face a \$40 billion cut under sequestration. The threat to defense spending is motivating lawmakers and the White House to find a work-around to avoid sequestration. House Appropriations Committee Chair Tom Cole (R-OK) noted that he received "verbal assurances" from the Trump Administration's budget office that automatic spending cuts would be "turned off" under a full-year CR.

Democratic Appropriations leaders, House Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Senate Committee Vice-Chair Patty Murray (D-WA), released a joint statement on Republican Leadership's decision to move forward with a year-long CR, noting "it's incredibly disappointing that Republican leadership is walking away from bipartisan negotiations to fund the government—and raising the risk of a shutdown in so doing."

#### **Take Action**

# Urge Congress to pass a FY25 spending bill with increased funding for HUD's affordable housing and homelessness programs!

Advocates can use NLIHC's resources to take action today and urge Congress to pass increased funding for affordable housing and homelessness in FY25, including for NLIHC's top priorities:

- Full funding to renew all existing contracts for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program.
- \$6.2 billion for public housing operations and \$5.2 billion for public housing capital needs.
- \$4.7 billion for HUD's Homeless Assistance Grants (HAG) program.
- \$100 million for the Eviction Protection Grant Program.
- At least \$1.3 billion for Tribal housing programs, plus \$150 million for competitive funds targeted to tribes with the greatest needs.

#### Use NLIHC's toolkits and resources to take action on FY25 funding, including by:

- **Emailing or calling members' offices** to tell them about the importance of affordable housing, homelessness, and community development resources important to you, your family, your community, or your work. You can use <a href="MLIHC's Take Action page">NLIHC's Take Action page</a> to look up your member offices or call/send an email directly.
- Sharing stories of people directly impacted by homelessness and housing instability. Storytelling adds emotional weight to your message and can help lawmakers see how their policy decisions impact actual people. <u>Learn about how to tell compelling stories</u> with this resource.
- Using our "Oppose Dramatic Cuts to Federal Investments in Affordable Housing" toolkit: This toolkit includes resources, talking points, advocacy ideas, and other helpful information on defending funding for affordable housing and homelessness resources in

the FY25 federal budget. Meet with your representatives and urge them to provide the most possible funding for these vital programs in any final FY25 budget agreement.

# House Votes to Adopt Blueprint for Massive Bill to Slash Medicaid and SNAP Funding, Extend Tax Cuts Primarily Benefiting High-Income Households and Corporations

### TAG: Budget

*Keywords: budget reconciliation, budget resolution* 

The House voted on January 25 to pass a budget resolution that will provide the blueprint for a massive reconciliation bill. The bill passed on a razor-thing margin, 217-215, with all Democrats and one Republican voting against. "Reconciliation" is a legislative process that allows for faster consideration of a bill by limiting debate time and suspending the Senate's "filibuster" rule, allowing a bill to pass the chamber with a simple majority of 51 votes rather than the 60 votes usually required. With Republicans in control of the House, Senate, and White House, they can use reconciliation to pass a bill without any support from Democrats.

The outline passed by the House aims to enact many of the Trump Administration's top priorities, including providing over \$4.5 trillion in additional spending for defense, immigration enforcement, and extending tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations that were included in the "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017," but are slated to expire later this year. In exchange, the bill also calls for at least \$2 trillion in cuts to federal spending, primarily targeting Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as well as clawing back funding provided in the "Inflation Reduction Act of 2022."

The Senate voted nearly along party lines last week to pass their own "skinny" budget resolution (see *Memo*, 2/24), which would advance some of the Administration's priorities around defense and border security while making changes to Medicaid and the SNAP program that would result in cost savings by removing people from the programs who are unable to meet burdensome new requirements.

With both the House and Senate resolutions passed, committees in each chamber will begin drafting legislative language to fulfill the instructions set out in the budget resolution. While housing assistance has not been named as a potential target for cuts, the anti-poverty programs being considered play a crucial role in economic stability for people and families with low incomes, helping them put food on the table and receive needed medical care. The financial assistance these programs provide also promotes housing stability: by helping families afford the cost of food and other necessities, more money is left over at the end of the month to ensure rent is paid. States can also use Medicaid to cover <a href="health-related social needs">health-related social needs</a>, including housing.

Threats to Medicaid, which serves over 7.2 million low-income people around the country, have triggered widespread outcry from advocates around the country, including people who rely on Medicaid for healthcare and other needs. Public opposition to the proposed cuts to Medicaid and SNAP is pressuring moderate and swing-district Republicans to express concerns about the bill

to leadership; with the outline passed, it will be crucial for advocates – especially those in Republican districts and states – to keep up the pressure on their members of Congress to vote against any reconciliation bill that would cut vital safety net programs.

The National Alliance to End Homelessness launched a <u>Take Action page</u> for advocates to quickly and easily contact their elected officials and urge them not to support cuts to Medicaid. Take action!

### **Congress**

# Senate Democrats Demand Answers on HUD's "DOGE" Task Force and Potential Housing Cuts

### **TAG:** Congress

Keywords: HUD, Scott Turner, DOGE, Elizabeth Warren, Chuck Schumer

On February 20, a coalition of 25 Senate Democrats, led by Senate Banking Committee Ranking Member Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), sent a <u>letter</u> to HUD Secretary Scott Turner demanding transparency on the recently announced "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) Task Force and its potential impact on housing programs.

The Senators recognized the importance of HUD's work, writing that "HUD engages in critical work supporting communities in expanding their housing supply, providing rental assistance, and preventing homelessness—work that is urgently important for millions of Americans looking to purchase a home to build generational wealth or find an affordable place to rent." The letter raised serious concerns over reports that HUD plans to lay off 50% of its workforce, shut down critical field offices, and cancel the Green and Resilient Retrofit Program—funding already awarded to improve over 30,000 homes for families, seniors, and people with disabilities—compromising HUD's ability to fully engage in their critical work. In addition to Senators Warren and Schumer, letter endorsers included Senators Alsobrooks (D-MD), Smith (D-MN), Reed (D-RI), Wyden (D-OR), Cortez Masto (D-NV), Padilla (D-CA), Murray (D-WA), Markey (D-MA), Gillibrand (D-NY), Warnock, (D-GA), Durbin (D-IL), Duckworth (D-IL), Luján (D-NM), Peters (D-MI), Klobuchar (D-MN), Merkley (D-OR), Blumenthal (D-CT), Sanders (I-VT), Kaine (D-VA), Cantwell (D-WA), Gallego (D-AZ), Hirono (D-HI), and Van Hollen (D-MD).

Additionally, the senators questioned DOGE's claims of identifying \$260 million in wasteful contracts at HUD, demanding a full accounting of these alleged savings. In the letter, Senators sought clarification on reports that DOGE's involvement has frozen future HUD funding grants and expressed concerns over the task force's access to sensitive agency data.

The letter requested Secretary Turner provide detailed responses by February 26, including explanations for the staff cuts, funding pauses, and contract cancellations. The senators emphasized that HUD's mission—to ensure safe, affordable housing for millions—must not be compromised by an opaque task force operating without congressional oversight.

# Ranking Member Maxine Waters Demands Oversight Hearing on HUD's DOGE Task Force and Housing Cuts

#### **TAG: Congress**

Keywords: Maxine Waters, DOGE, HUD, Scott Turner, French Hill, House Financial Services

Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA), Ranking Member of the House Financial Services Committee (HFSC), sent a <u>letter</u> on February 25 to HFSC Chair French Hill (R-AR) to hold an emergency housing hearing on HUD Secretary Scott Turner's mass firings and funding freezes under the newly created "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) Task Force.

In the letter to Chairman Hill, Ranking Member Waters warned that "Secretary Turner has partnered with unelected billionaire Elon Musk and the DOGE to terminate thousands of HUD employees who carry out the work of the agency—with further plans to substantially cut staffing levels in DC and local field offices." Furthermore, she shared reports that the Secretary has continued to improperly withhold funding appropriated by Congress, despite a court-ordered restraining order on the funding freeze.

The letter further raises concerns over the Secretary's decision to halt enforcement of the Equal Access Rule, which protects LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination in homeless shelters. Additionally, staffing cuts at FHA and Ginnie Mae have alarmed mortgage industry leaders, who warn that the instability could disrupt mortgage markets and prevent closings.

These dangerous and unlawful actions by Secretary Turner and DOGE compromise HUD's federal mission to "create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all." Ranking Member Waters urged the House Financial Services Committee to investigate these actions before they cause irreparable harm to renters, homeowners, and housing providers across the country.

Read Ranking Member Waters' full letter here.

Read Ranking Member Waters' press release here.

# **Affordable Housing Supply**

# NLIHC Submits Statement for House Financial Services Committee Hearing on Housing Supply

#### TAG: Homelessness and Housing First

Keywords: Financial Services Committee, Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, Congress

NLIHC submitted a statement emphasizing the need for more affordable rental housing for the upcoming U.S. House Financial Services Committee Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance hearing, "Building Our Future: Increasing Housing Supply in America," to be held **March 4** at **2 pm ET**.

NLIHC's statement focused on the need for more affordable supply for renters with the greatest needs – those with extremely low-incomes who are at risk of housing instability and homelessness. Research from NLIHC's *The Gap* report shows that there is a shortage of 7.3 million affordable and available homes for extremely low-income (ELI) renters. As a result, 74 percent of ELI renters are severely cost-burdened, paying over half of their income on housing. NLIHC's *Out of Reach* report shows that 14 of the 20 largest occupations in the United State pay median wages less than the one- or two-bedroom housing wage (the wage needed to afford a modest apartment at fair market rent).

In the statement, NLIHC encouraged Congress to take action to increase the supply of homes affordable to ELI renters including expanding the Housing Trust Fund; addressing the over \$90 billion backlog of capital needs at public housing properties, expanding and reforming the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, and fully funding and staffing HUD programs. The hearing will probably include a discussion of the affordability needs of middle-income households. NLIHC supports zoning reforms that reduce restrictions on construction, which typically address housing needs for middle-income households rather than ELI households. NLIHC opposes subsidies for the construction or substantial rehabilitation of homes for middle-income renters, such as a middle-income housing tax credit. Read more about why these proposals are wasteful and misguided <a href="here">here</a>.

Information about the hearing, witness list, and a link to watch the hearing can be found <u>here</u>. Read NLIHC's full statement <u>here</u>.

#### **State and Local Innovation**

Recap of 2/25 State and Local Innovation Campaign's "Strengthening Renters' Rights: A Primer on 'Just Cause' Protections" Webinar

#### TAG: State and Local Innovation

Keywords: Just Cause, tenant protections

On February 25, NLIHC's State and Local Innovation campaign kicked off its "Strengthening Renters' Rights: A Primer on State and Local Tenant Protections" webinar series for the year with a call focused on "just cause" eviction protections. Known commonly as "good" or "for" cause eviction standards, just cause protections establish standards that limit the reasons for which a landlord can evict a tenant or refuse to renew a tenant's lease when the tenant is not at fault or in violation of any laws. By establishing a well-defined set of principles for which a landlord can justly evict a tenant, just cause eviction protections seek to address arbitrary, retaliatory, and discriminatory eviction practices – especially those that occur outside of the formal eviction process or through the courts, known as "informal evictions." During the call, attendees had the opportunity to learn more about just cause eviction protections, the core

components of such laws, and where these protections have currently been passed. Attendees also had the opportunity to learn more about two state-level campaigns to enact just cause protections for tenants in Oregon and Washington state. Finally, attendees had the opportunity to learn more about NLIHC's National Tenant's Bill of Rights platform, including how advocates can endorse the bill to strengthen renters' rights at the federal level. Slides from the 2/25 webinar can be found here.

Speaking first on the call was Nada Hussein, NLIHC's State and Local Innovation project coordinator. Providing an overview of just cause protections, Nada shared information on NLIHC's toolkit and case study released on just cause protections in fall 2024. Embedded in the toolkit is an overview of just cause protections, the common components of the protection, information about state and local jurisdictions that have adopted the protection, provisions that should be taken into consideration when enacting the protection, and complementary policies that can be passed alongside the protection to ensure the greatest impact possible for renter households across the country. During the call, Nada shared that – as evidenced by NLIHC's State and Local Tenant Protections Database - some form of just cause protections have been enacted in 11 states and 27 localities nationwide, including in California, Colorado, Michigan, and Louisiana, with states like Connecticut, Hawai'i, and Maryland having introduced state-level legislation in 2025 to advance just cause eviction standards.

Nada also shared that just cause protections are typically comprised of four key components, as evidenced by an analysis of existing just cause legislation that has been passed across the country. Typically, just cause protections include: (1) a clear definition of the term "just cause" and a clear account of the legal grounds for eviction; (2) explicit notice requirements ensuring a tenant will have advance warning that they will be subject to an eviction, including the reason why they are being evicted; (3) definition of the scope of the law, including exemptions of coverage; and (4) an explanation of the enforcement mechanisms used to uphold the law.

Next, attendees heard from housing advocates and legal service providers in Oregon and Washington state about efforts to enact just cause protections for renters in 2019 and 2021, respectively. Speaking first was Sybil Hebb, Director of Legislative Advocacy at the Oregon Law Center. Sybil spoke about years-long efforts led by tenant advocates and other housing advocates to overcome existing state challenges, including preemptions, myths about small landlords, and other inaccurate narratives to push for "Senate Bill 608" in the Oregon legislature. Specifically, Sybil pointed to targeted legislator outreach, key legislative champions who supported the bill, a strong media and press strategy, and coalition building to help advocate for just cause protections in the state. It was the "Stable Homes for Oregon Families" coalition, which was comprised of issue experts and organizers, legal exports, and political experts, who helped inform the advocacy campaign for "Senate Bill 608," which states that just cause protections will kick in after the first year of a tenant's occupancy and includes five "landlord-based" causes allowing a landlord to terminate a tenant's lease even if the tenant is not at-fault. Currently, just cause protections in Oregon do not apply to units with two or fewer units if the landlord lives in one of the units.

Next was Rachael Myers, Executive Director of the <u>Washington Low Income Housing Alliance</u>, and Mindy Woods, board member of the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance and the National Low Income Housing Coalition, as well as the founding member of the <u>Resident Action Project</u>. Rachael and Mindy spoke about advocacy efforts in the state of Washington to advocate for "House Bill 1236" in 2021. Rachael first highlighted the political landscape that allowed for

just cause protections to be passed, including how the bill was passed alongside other key tenant protection bills in the state, including right to counsel protections, a new rental assistance and homelessness prevention fund, and a \$1.7 billion funding package for building affordable homes, shelter, emergency funding, and foreclosure assistance. Rachael also spoke about the allowable causes for the state's just cause bill, which includes a tenant's nonpayment of rent, a documented lease violation, evidence of a crime, nuisance, or waste, and renovations – to name a few. Rachael also spoke about existing loopholes embedded in the state's bill, which includes no limits on rental increases, and workarounds for notice requirements for tenants. Mindy joined Rachael to talk about the supporters of Washington's just cause bill, the champions in the legislature who helped move the bill forward, and to offer the perspective of a tenant with lived experience – sharing stories of impact from tenants wrongfully evicted.

Finally, the call concluded with a presentation from Kayla Blackwell, a housing policy analyst at NLIHC. Kayla shared information about NLIHC's <u>National Tenant Bill of Rights</u> and the seven key components that comprise the federal policy platform to strengthen renters' rights. Cosponsored with the <u>National Housing Law Project</u> and <u>Tenant Union Federation</u>, the National Tenants Bill of Rights advocates for: (1) the right to a fair application; (2) the right to a fair lease; (3) the right to freedom from discrimination and harassment; (4) the right to a habitable home; (5) the right to reasonable rent and costs; (6) the right to organize; and (7) the right to safeguards against evictions. Kayla shared that attendees can endorse the National Tenants Bill of Rights <u>here</u>.

NLIHC's State and Local Innovation campaign team will host two additional webinars in this series, with the next two webinars taking place on April 16 and June 11. Both webinars will take place from 2-3 pm ET and will focus on rent stabilization protections and laws that strengthen code enforcement procedures and habitability standards, respectively.

To learn more about the work of the State and Local Innovation campaign, please visit: <a href="https://nlihc.org/state-and-local-innovation">https://nlihc.org/state-and-local-innovation</a>.

Registration for the next two webinars can be found here.

## **Fair Housing**

**HUD Releases Weakened AFFH Interim Final Rule, Sen. Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Waters (D-CA) Condemn Secretary Turner for Allowing Housing Discrimination** 

#### TAG: Fair Housing

Keywords: fair housing, AFFH, HUD, Secretary Turner, Civil Rights Act of 1968, Housing Act

On Wednesday, HUD Secretary Scott Turner <u>announced</u> the termination of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule, replacing it with an <u>Interim Final Rule</u> (IFR) that merely requires HUD grantees to self-attest to their commitment to fair housing. In response, House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA) and Senate Banking,

Housing and Urban Affairs Committee Ranking Member Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) released a <u>statement</u> calling out Secretary Turner for "abandoning HUD's legal obligation to eliminate housing discrimination in the United States." NLIHC is coordinating closely with fair housing advocates to fight for full implementation of the "Civil Rights Act of 1968" to promote fair housing and inclusive communities.

The AFFH rule has been a political football under several presidential administrations. The initial legislation in 1968 prohibited housing segregation and required states and localities to take it a step further, affirmatively furthering fair housing with the use of federal housing dollars. Most recently, the Biden Administration removed the first Trump Administration's harmful 2020 rule but failed to implement a final AFFH rule. The Biden rule, an interim rule called "Restoring Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Definitions and Certifications," required "program participants" (local and state governments as well as public housing agencies, PHAs) to submit "certifications" (pledges) that they will affirmatively further fair housing (AFFH) in connection with their Consolidated Plans (ConPlans), Annual Action Plans to their ConPlans, and Annual PHA Plans. The IFR did not require a specific planning process such as the Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH) created by the Obama Administration's 2015 AFFH Rule. Instead, it created a voluntary fair housing planning process; program participants could use the AFH, or the previous Analysis of Impediments (AI) to Fair Housing, or some other means to demonstrate compliance with the obligation to affirmatively further fair housing.

The new Trump Administration AFFH rule allows program participants to provide "a general commitment that grantees will take active steps to promote fair housing". The IFR now requires grantees to simply attest that they have taken *any* action to promote fair housing. Secretary Turner claims the new rule will cut "costly red tape imposed on localities," but for decades, advocates have warned that the promise of the "Fair Housing Act" has never been fulfilled, and this failure continues to exacerbate racial disparities in housing and homelessness. In an April 2024 letter to President Biden, nearly 300 organizations emphasized that "a fair housing market cannot be realized without a strong AFFH rule. By investing in interventions that ensure everyone can access fair, affordable, and accessible housing in thriving neighborhoods, we can create communities of opportunity" (see *Memo*, 4/22/2024).

Members of Congress agree with advocates on the critical importance of a strong AFFH rule. Representative Waters and Senator Warren responded to the new AFFH rule with deep disappointment, stating in full: "Secretary Turner is abandoning HUD's legal obligation to eliminate housing discrimination in the United States. At a time when America is experiencing a full-blown housing crisis and record levels of housing discrimination complaints, this outright assault on civil rights takes us back to the days when the federal government rubber stamped segregation and discrimination. He is eliminating a key tool that makes housing more affordable and accessible to everyday people, including people of color, older Americans, veterans, people with disabilities, families with children, and so many others. The fight for fair housing is on and Democrats will not back down until we fulfill the promise of equal opportunity in housing for every American."

Read HUD Secretary Turner's press statement announcing the termination here.

Read the AFFH Interim Final Rule here.

#### **Public Resource**

#### NHLP Launches Story Bank to Fight Back Against the Trump Administration

#### TAG: Public Resource

Keywords: Tenant rights, housing justice, corporate landlords, rental assistance, legal aid, National Housing Law Project

The National Housing Law Project (NHLP) recently announced <u>Story Bank</u>, a powerful new initiative to fight back against the Trump Administration's unlawful and dangerous housing policies. NHLP is calling for tenants, legal aid attorneys, and housing advocates to share their stories to help build collective power and leverage for the housing justice movement.

Stories are powerful. In an era of misinformation and corporate influence, personal stories cut through the noise and help build the power necessary to demand change. By sharing real life experiences, we can hold decision-makers accountable and push for policies that protect tenants, not corporate profits.

While they are seeking varied and diverse stories, NHLP lists a few guiding questions to generate ideas from participants: "Is the program you work for losing funding as a result of the Administration's executive orders? Are you unable to access services because a program's funding was cut? Was there a disruption in your rental assistance payments related to the Administration's actions?"

Share your story <u>here</u>.

# PIF Hosts Webinar on Congressional Threats to Immigrant Families and Benefits in Reconciliation

#### TAG: Public Resource

Keywords: Reconciliation, PIF, Immigrant families, Medicaid, SNAP

On February 27, Protecting Immigrant Families (PIF) hosted a webinar on "Congressional Threats to Immigrant Families and Benefits in Reconciliation." During the call, PIF outlined that the House and Senate's Budget Reconciliation bills, while different, both pose major threats to immigrant families, including restricting eligibility for vital safety net programs such as threats to immigrant families receiving Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Child Tax Credits. PIF also launched a <u>national sign-on letter</u> in support of housing and other vital services for immigrant families, with a deadline of March 7.

PIF emphasized the importance of a defensive and offensive strategy. On the defensive side, they are working to educate all members of Congress on the dangers of the cuts and encourage members to speak out in opposition. On the offensive side, they laid out tactics like meeting with members of Congress, increasing local media coverage of the harmful cuts, and reaching out to local and state officials. For each tactic, PIF has a wealth of resources available for its partners.

PIF also launched an organizational sign-on <u>letter</u> to demonstrate the impact of cuts on immigrant communities across the country. The deadline to <u>sign</u> the letter is March 7th.

View a recording of the webinar <u>here</u>.

View the webinar slides here.

Read and sign the letter in support of immigrant families <u>here</u>.

## **Disaster Housing Recovery**

# Report from Harvard Law Program Calls into Question Administration's Ability to Eliminate FEMA

#### TAG: Disaster

Keywords: Disaster Recovery, FEMA

Research by the Harvard Environmental and Energy Law Program (EELP), a member of the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHRC), reveals that much of the current Administration's plans for FEMA and the disaster recovery system rest, at best, on shaky legal ground. From the summary dismissal of agency staff to calling for the abolition of the agency, this report lays out how each strategy is likely to fare – and what the consequences may be for our disaster response and recovery system.

In 1970, Congress passed the "Disaster Relief Act," later amended and renamed the "Stafford Act," to ensure consistency in the distribution of federal disaster assistance regardless of who is in the White House or the politics of the impacted area. Specifically, Congress passed this law to end policymakers "logrolling" individual disaster bills, which allowed representatives to exchange political favors and attach earmarks to disaster-specific funding packages but led to significant delays and variability in the types of assistance survivors received. By nationalizing one federal disaster relief framework, Congress sought to ensure that all disaster survivors have the same access to assistance, and that the assistance is delivered as efficiently and consistently as possible.

Despite this history, calls have come from within the Administration to do away with the federal disaster system. The report by EELP states that the president likely cannot abolish FEMA via executive order as the president lacks authority to undo or amend statutory or regulatory mandates via such a method.

Additionally, the president likely cannot require that specific conditions are attached to distributing disaster assistance. According to the unconstitutional conditions doctrine, the government cannot deny a discretionary benefit to someone "on a basis that infringes his constitutionally protected interests." As applied to state and tribal governments seeking federal disaster assistance, the doctrine prohibits Congress and the president from conditioning that assistance on the state or tribal government giving up authority it is otherwise empowered to exercise under the Constitution.

Despite these legal arguments, the Administration appears to be set on attempting to eliminate or otherwise subvert the agency's statutory mandates in favor of a discretionary, grant-based system controlled by the White House, placing the onus of responding to disasters directly on the states. Elected officials from both sides of the aisle came together in 1970 and 1974 to affirm the federal government's role in creating a streamlined and effective disaster recovery system to assist disaster survivors. As President Richard Nixon proclaimed while signing the "Disaster Relief Act of 1974," "[t]his bill responds to a vital need of the American people, and it demonstrates that the Federal Government, in cooperation with State and local authorities, is ready and able to provide compassionate assistance to the victims of natural disasters."

Read EELP's full analysis <u>here</u>.

# The Government Accountability Office Issues Unprecedented Warning on the State of the U.S. Disaster Recovery System; Recommends Permanent Authorization of HUD Disaster Program

#### TAG: Disaster

Keywords: Disaster Recovery, FEMA

The Government Accountability Office (GAO), responsible for congressional oversight, has issued an unprecedented warning about the current state of the U.S.'s disaster recovery system. Coinciding with attempts by Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to decrease the size of the agency's workforce, the report found that FEMA lacks the necessary staff to carry out its mission.

"Survivors face numerous challenges receiving needed aid, including lengthy and complex application review processes," the GAO said, echoing a concern that has been raised by advocates for years. "Reforming the federal government's approach to disaster recovery and reducing fragmentation could improve service delivery to disaster survivors."

This is the first time GAO has ever put disaster assistance on its annual "High-Risk List," which highlights areas of the federal government that are "seriously vulnerable" to waste, fraud, and abuse or need transformation. Despite this high-risk rating, DOGE has moved forward with dismissing agency staff – threatening the country's ability to respond to disasters. The GAO urged Congress to create an independent commission "to recommend reforms to the federal government's approach to disaster recovery."

The report also recommended that Congress permanently authorize HUD's long-term disaster recovery program. This could be accomplished by passing the NLIHC-endorsed "Reforming Disaster Recovery Act" (RDRA). This bipartisan bill would permanently authorize HUD's Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program, which provides flexible grants to help presidentially declared disaster areas rebuild affordable housing and other infrastructure and make critical reforms to ensure a more efficient and equitable disaster recovery. This would be a crucial step forward in reforming the country's broken disaster recovery system and ensure that all households – especially those with low-incomes – can receive the assistance they need to fully recover.

Read the GAO's full report here.

Take action to support the RDRA here.

Read more about the RDRA here.

## **Opportunity Starts at Home**

OSAH Campaign Releases Updated Fact Sheets on Connections between Housing and Disability Rights, Food Access, and Homelessness

Tag: Opportunity Starts at Home

Keywords: Opportunity Starts at Home, multi-sectors

NLIHC's Opportunity Starts at Home (OSAH) campaign has released three updated fact sheets highlighting the impacts of affordable housing on food access, rates of homelessness, and the well-being of people with disabilities. Access to accessible, safe, and affordable housing is out of reach for the lowest income renters, and high rental housing costs profoundly impact people with disabilities living on Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In 2024, the national average rent for a basic one-bedroom rental unit was equal to 142% of the average SSI payment. Households with low incomes often must sacrifice other essential needs to stay housed, and 45% of lower-income renter households who were behind on rent last year experienced food insufficiency as a result. The number of people experiencing homelessness has increased in recent years, and expanding access to affordable housing can stabilize vulnerable households to prevent eviction and help households exit homelessness. The new fact sheets, developed in collaboration with key partners including the Center for American Progress (a campaign Roundtable Member), the Food Research & Action Center, and National Alliance to End Homelessness (both members of OSAH's Steering Committee), draw on research to highlight the intersections between affordable housing and each of these policy areas. Read the new fact sheets here.

In total, the OSAH campaign has posted <u>16 multi-sector fact sheets</u>. Each fact sheet compiles landmark research to help policymakers, opinion leaders, and the public understand the deep

connections between housing and other national priorities, from healthcare to education and economic growth. Advocates are encouraged to download the fact sheets to strengthen their efforts to reach out to potential allies in other fields and make the case for cross-sector collaboration. To broaden the movement for housing justice, housing advocates must ensure that allies in other sectors fully appreciate the extent to which housing influences their own priorities and goals.

Find the full list of fact sheets **here**.

#### Research

# Renter, Low Income, and Nonwhite Households Are More Likely to Lack Access to Air Conditioning

#### TAG: Poverty & Economic Well-Being

Keywords: Urban Inequality, AC Access

A recent study in *Applied Geography*, titled "Climate Gaps: Disparities in Residential Air Conditioning Access Across Ten US Metropolitan Areas," explores the significant disparities in residential air conditioning (AC) access across various U.S. cities. The survey's findings indicate that low-income, renter, and minority households have limited access to AC and are more likely to rely on window units, which are less effective at cooling and mitigating health risks associated with extreme heat. This is especially concerning as heatwaves are the deadliest natural hazard and are exacerbated in frequency and intensity by climate change.

The authors used data from the 2021 Metropolitan American Housing Survey (MAHS), part of the U.S. Census Bureau's biennial American Housing Survey, including over 17,500 households across ten Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). This data enabled the researchers to examine households' race/ethnicity, income levels, housing tenure, building type, and the age of the housing units in relation to AC access. Household income was grouped into three categories: \$4,600 to \$40,000 (low income/working class), \$40,401 to \$96,000 (middle income/middle class), and \$96,001 to \$1,587,000 (high income/upper class). Access was broken into three categories: central AC (higher-quality), window AC (lower-quality), and no AC. Using these variables, they created several models to predict AC access and type based on demographic and building characteristics.

The study reveals that Hispanic and Asian householders are significantly more likely to lack AC compared to their white counterparts. Black, Hispanic, Indigenous and multi-racial households were also between 1.2 and 1.7 times more likely to have window AC instead of higher quality central AC. The authors emphasize that these disparities are not merely coincidental but stem from structural inequalities, such as historical discrimination in housing markets and policies like redlining, which disproportionately affect communities of color.

The study also highlights unequal access to cooling based on income, with middle class households 1.5 times more likely and working-class households nearly three times as likely to

use lower-quality window units compared to upper class households. When examining the overall likelihood of having AC access, regardless of type, middle class households were 1.5 times more likely to lack AC than upper class households, while working class households were twice as likely.

The study shows that AC access also varies with housing tenure, type, and age. Renters in both single-family and multifamily units are over two times less likely to have AC, and 2.5 times more likely to have window AC, than single-family owners. While mobile home renters and owners had similar levels of AC access as single-family, they were between five and six times more likely to have window AC. The research also reveals that housing units built before 1960 are three times more likely to lack AC and four times more likely to have window AC.

These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to reduce AC access disparities, particularly for renters and in low-income and minority communities that are most vulnerable to extreme heat. The authors recommend policy measures such as expanding AC access through federal, state, and local programs, incentivizing AC installation in rental properties and updating building codes to require central AC in areas experiencing frequent high temperatures. They also stress the importance of addressing the underlying social and economic factors that contribute to these disparities, including income inequality and housing quality.

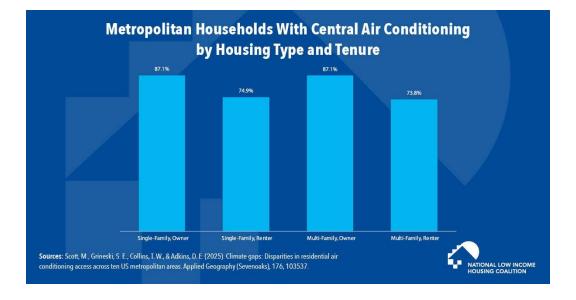
Read the article here.

#### Fact of the Week

# Metropolitan Renters Have More Limited Access to Central Air Conditioning than Owners

#### TAG: Fact of the Week

Keywords: air conditioning, climate change, inequities



**Source**: Scott, M., Grineski, S. E., Collins, T. W., & Adkins, D. E. (2025). Climate gaps: Disparities in residential air conditioning access across ten US metropolitan areas. Applied *Geography (Sevenoaks)*, 176, 103537.

#### From the Field

# Today's (3/3) "Tenant Talk Live" Rescheduled! Tune into Hands off Housing event instead!

#### TAG: Tenant Talk Live

Keywords: Tenant Talk Live, rescheduled, postponed, Hands off Housing

NLIHC's "Tenant Talk Live" for March has been postponed. Stay tuned for information about rescheduling! In the meantime, please tune into the live event, "Hands off Housing!" The event will take place **today, March 3** at **5 pm E**T at **HUD headquarters**. If you are located in the DMV metropolitan area, we highly encourage you to attend. For those at home, the event will also be available online at **this link**.

Make sure you don't miss out on the next Tenant Talk Live by <u>registering</u> here!

Remember: Tenant Talk Live would not be possible without tenants like you! We strive to connect and engage with tenants and tenant leaders through our webinars. If you are a low-income tenant and have a topic you would like to propose for an upcoming Tenant Talk Live, or if you would like to participate as a speaker on an upcoming call or webinar, please email <a href="mailto:sbetancourt@nlihc.org">sbetancourt@nlihc.org</a>.

Stay up to date on Tenant Talk Live events via the Facebook group.

#### **NLIHC Careers**

# **NLIHC Welcomes Cecily Thomas as Development Coordinator**

NLIHC is excited to welcome Cecily Thomas as our new Development Coordinator and will support the external affairs team and its fund development efforts. Cecily is a communications specialist, public health advocate, and fundraiser passionate about housing rights. Most recently, Cecily coordinated the development and digital communication efforts of a small, low-income healthcare services nonprofit in Fairfax County.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cecily was a Health Counselor at the Ali Forney Center, providing services to unhoused LGBTQ+ youth. Before that, Cecily worked at a low-income and unhoused crisis drop-in organization, coordinating communications and development. They also facilitated development and administration efforts at national healthcare academies, such as the American Academy of Physician Associates, American Academy of Neurology, American

College of Neurology, and American Chemical Society. They graduated from James Madison University with a culture-focused bachelor of arts in communication studies with a pre-law track. Their combination of national and grassroots efforts empowers them with a unique perspective that is fueled by unbridled passion for the right of accessible, affordable housing and overall compassion for humanity.

#### **NLIHC Seeks Director of Communications**

NLIHC seeks a Director of Communications to work closely with the NLIHC Vice President of External Affairs to support the implementation of NLIHC's communications strategies. The Director of Communications will manage communication plans, media, brand, and public relations and expand overall visibility and reach in support of the Coalition's mission, vision, goals, and objectives. The Director of Communications will supervise two positions: a Graphic Communications Manager and a Graphic Communications Sr. Coordinator. The salary range for this position is contingent upon experience and is from \$92,000 - \$110,00. This position requires physical time in the office, and the candidate must be located in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area or be able to commute to our office located in D.C. for a hybrid work schedule.

#### **Responsibilities/Duties**

- Manage the development and implementation of the Coalition's internal and external communication strategies, including publications, e-communications, media, digital, public relations, and marketing.
- Develop and maintain key communication channels, adapting and improving the approach in coordination with external trends and housing policy priorities.
- Lead efforts to drive and execute external digital communications, including websites, social media, email campaigns, multimedia.
- Develop and oversee implementation of external marketing and communications strategies, tactics, and deliverables.
- Oversee development and implementation of creative assets.
- Manage content and editorial needs for all digital platforms.
- Collaborate with team leads to drive internal communications to support initiatives and programs.
- Manage communications team workflows for requests, publications, and campaigns.
- Develop/maintain strong relationships with reporters, writers, and opinion leaders in print, broadcast, online, and social media.
- Maintain up-to-date database of all media contacts.
- Pitch stories and secure regular media interviews and editorial board meetings for President/CEO and other Coalition staff and members as appropriate.
- Collaborate with team leads to develop and implement messaging strategy.
- Prepare and distribute press releases and media alerts; manage press events for NLIHC and state partners.

- Manage the process of placing op-eds, letters-to-the-editor, blogs pieces, and other opinion pieces for president/CEO and other Coalition staff and members as appropriate.
- Approve articles for Coalition staff and members as appropriate for placement in partner publications.
- Curate new activation opportunities with media organizations.
- Manage media performance strategy and metrics.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for use of social media.
- Monitor print, broadcast, online, and social media for coverage of NLIHC, NLIHC campaigns, and NLIHC policy priorities; reach out to amplify or correct as needed.
- Stay abreast of new developments in social media and recommend advances and changes to NLIHC platforms. Maintain records of all media work; produce metrics of all social media contacts; prepare monthly reports.
- Manage content development, writing, and editing of NLIHC publications.
- Manage internal staff and state partners in development of media strategies.
- Develop and implement webinars, workshops, and written materials to aid NLIHC members in use of social media and press strategies.
- Collaborate with teams across the organization to amplify programs, projects, and campaigns.
- Supervise communications team and interns.
- Facilitate opportunities for professional development.
- Assist in implementation of the annual Housing Policy Forum, Leadership Awards Reception, and other events.

#### **Qualifications**

This is a full-time position, and candidates must be physically located in the metropolitan Washington, DC area. Applicants must have a bachelor's degree. Applicants must have a strong commitment to social justice and NLIHC's mission. This position would be ideal for someone with five or more years of communications and management experience. Proficiency with Microsoft Office suite and Adobe Creative Cloud is required.

A person will be most successful in this role if you have knowledge and experience in all aspects of communications, digital media, social media, media relations, PR, and brand management.

An equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, NLIHC offers a competitive salary and a generous benefits package.

Interested candidates should submit a resume, cover letter with salary requirement, and one writing sample to Jen Butler, NLIHC VP of External Affairs, via email at <u>jbutler@nlihc.org</u>.

#### **NLIHC News**

NLIHC in the News for the Week of February 24

The following are some of the news stories to which NLIHC contributed during the week of February 24:

- "Bill would allow tenants to improve their credit score with rent in Nevada" *KUNR Public Radio*, February 21, at: <a href="https://bit.ly/43kZZhA">https://bit.ly/43kZZhA</a>
- "Johnson County seeks proposals for affordable housing project" *The Gazette*, February 23, at: <a href="https://bit.ly/4bw2gsb">https://bit.ly/4bw2gsb</a>
- "Have the Democrats Give Up on the Homelessness Crisis?" *New Republic*, February 24, at: <a href="https://bit.ly/3F4T6XG">https://bit.ly/3F4T6XG</a>

#### Where to Find Us – March 3

- <u>United Native American Housing Association</u>'s Annual Meeting Denver, Colorado, March 31 (Raquel Harati)
- <u>Humane Society Animal Care Expo</u> Las Vegas, NV, April 17 (Julie Walker)
- <u>Kansas Statewide Homeless Coalition 2025 Summit</u> Topeka, KS, April 22-23 (Tia Turner)

#### **NLIHC Staff**

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Nada Hussein, ERASE Project Coordinator, x264

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Renee Willis, Interim President and CEO, x247

Tiara Wood, External Affairs Coordinator