

NLIHC Advocacy Toolkit



SUMMER/FALL 2019

NLIHC Partners,

Thanks to your hard work, the housing justice movement is building strength. This year, more than 120 events were held in 34 states plus Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico during the 3rd annual [Our Homes, Our Voices](#) national housing week of action. Through our [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign, leaders in health, disability, education, civil rights, criminal justice, local government and others are joining our advocacy for increased federal investments to make homes affordable for the lowest-income people, bringing new awareness, connections and power to our work.

Our efforts are increasing public awareness: according to a recent national poll commissioned by NLIHC, eight in ten people say the president and Congress should take major action to make homes affordable to the lowest-income people. And political leaders are responding, with members of Congress and 2020 presidential candidates proposing historically bold policy solutions – all of which we are tracking and amplifying through the [Our Homes, Our Votes: 2020](#) project.

It is critical for advocates to build on these successes by continuing to engage directly with policymakers – and there is no better time for this engagement than during the [congressional recess](#) when Senators and Representatives are back in their home states and districts. **The Senate is on recess from August 5 to September 9, while the House is on recess starting July 29.**

In this toolkit, you can find key information about areas where you can help influence critical issues before Congress. We've included a list of our three most urgent priorities, as well as legislation NLIHC supports. We hope you will use the upcoming congressional recess to urge your Senators and Representatives to take action, cosponsor bills, and champion affordable housing solutions for the lowest income people.

If you have any questions, or need additional information, please feel free to contact Sarah Mickelson (smickelson@nlihc.org), NLIHC's Senior Public Policy Director, or Joey Lindstrom (jlindstrom@nlihc.org), NLIHC's Field Organizing Manager.

Thank you for your commitment and your advocacy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Yentel".

Diane Yentel
President & CEO

Urgent Priorities for Congress

1. BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

URGE YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES PROVIDE THE HIGHEST FUNDING POSSIBLE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

The House recently enacted its Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 spending bill, which provides a robust increase in funding to housing programs that serve low-income people and communities. Thanks to the leadership of House Subcommittee Chair David Price (D-NC) and Ranking Member Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), the House bill is a clear rejection of President Trump's position on affordable housing investments and policy. The bill provides HUD programs with more than \$13.4 billion above the president's FY20 request and at least \$5.9 billion above FY19 enacted levels. It also clearly rebukes the harmful rent increases, rigid work requirements, and de facto time limits proposed by the president in his past budget requests and in subsequent legislation. Moreover, the subcommittee included legislative language to halt cruel proposals from the President to evict mixed-status immigrant families from assisted housing and to roll back LGBT protections. Overall, the House bill builds on the funding increases and policy wins advocates and congressional champions secured in recent years. More details can be found in NLIHC's [analysis of the House bill](#) and in an [updated budget chart](#).

The Senate will begin to work on its spending bills starting in September. It is critical for advocates to encourage their Senators to fund HUD programs at the House-approved levels.

2. INFRASTRUCTURE PACKAGE

Urge your Senators and Representatives to include housing investments in any infrastructure package, including \$15 billion to repair public housing assets and \$5 billion for the national Housing Trust Fund.

To maximize the impact on long-term economic growth, any infrastructure package should include resources to increase the supply of affordable housing for families with the lowest incomes. Investing in affordable housing infrastructure—through new construction and preservation—will address the underlying cause of the housing crisis: the lack of affordable homes for people with extremely low incomes. To learn more about why housing is infrastructure, see NLIHC's [factsheet](#).

3. HOUSING FINANCE REFORM

Urge your Senators and Representatives to expand the national Housing Trust Fund through housing finance reform to at least \$3.5 billion annually, as part of a broader commitment to access and affordability.

Past bipartisan bills would have expanded the HTF to at least \$3.5 billion annually. This should be the starting point for future legislation.

Legislation Supported by NLIHC

Please urge your Senators and Representatives to cosponsor the following bills:

INVESTMENTS IN AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOMES

- **American Housing and Economic Mobility Act** ([S.787](#), [H.R. 1737](#)) - Senator Warren (D-MA), Gillibrand (D-NY), and Markey (D-MA), along with Reps. Richmond (D-LA), Cummings (D-MD), Lee (D-CA), and Moore (D-WI). If enacted, this ambitious proposal would help end housing poverty and homelessness in America by directly addressing the underlying cause of the affordable housing crisis – the severe shortage of affordable rental homes for people with the lowest incomes – through a robust investment of nearly \$45 billion annually in the national Housing Trust Fund. The bill also includes resources to repair public housing, build or rehabilitate housing in tribal and Native Hawaiian communities, and create and preserve affordable homes in rural areas. For more information, see NLIHC's [factsheet](#) on the AHM Act.
- **Ending Homelessness Act** ([H.R. 1856](#)) - Rep. Waters (D-CA). The [bill](#) proposes to invest more than \$13 billion over five years, including \$1 billion annually for the national Housing Trust Fund, to address the shortage of affordable housing and to combat homelessness. The bill passed out of committee
- **Task Force on the Impact of the Affordable Housing Crisis Act** ([S.1772](#), [H.R. 3211](#)) - Senators Young (R-IN), Cantwell (D-WA), and King (I-ME), along with Reps. Peters (D-CA), Khanna (D-CA), and Herrera Beutler (R-WA). The bill would establish a bipartisan task force to evaluate and create recommendations on the affordable housing crisis.
- **Affordable Housing Tax Credit Improvement Act** ([S.1703](#), [H.R. 3077](#)) - Senator Cantwell (D-WA), Wyden (D-OR), Young (R-IN), and Isakson (R-GA), along with Reps. DelBene (D-WA), Beyer (D-VA), Marchant (R-TX), and Walorski (R-IN). The bill would expand the Housing Credit by 50% over five years and make important reforms to enable deeper income targeting in the program. To learn more, see NLIHC's [factsheet](#) on the bill.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN INCOMES AND RENT

- **Rent Relief Act** ([S.1106](#), [H.R. 2169](#)) - Senators Harris (D-CA), Blumenthal (D-CT), Gillibrand (D-NY), and Hassan (D-NH) and Rep. Scott Peters (D-CA), Davis (D-IL), and Gomez (D-CA). The bill creates a new refundable tax credit to cost-burdened households, making it possible for millions of the lowest-income people to afford roofs over their heads. To learn more, see NLIHC's [chart](#) comparing renter credit proposals.
- **Housing, Opportunity, Mobility, and Equity (HOME) Act** - Senator Booker (D-NJ) and Rep. Clyburn (D-SC). The bill creates a new, refundable tax credit to eliminate housing cost burdens for millions of the lowest-income people and incentivizes local communities to address regulatory and zoning barriers that restrict supply and drive up housing costs. To learn more, see NLIHC's [chart](#) comparing renter credit proposals.

ADVANCING FAIR HOUSING AND EQUITY

- **Keeping Families Together Act of 2019** ([S. 1904](#), [H.R. 2763](#)) – Senator Gillibrand (D-NY) and Garcia (D-TX). The bill would prevent HUD from taking steps to evict mixed-status immigrant families – including 55,000 children who are U.S. citizens or legal residents – from federally assisted housing.
- **Ensuring Equal Access to Shelter Act of 2019** ([S. 2007](#), [H.R. 3018](#)) – Senator Schatz (D-HI) and Rep. Wexton (D-VA). The bill would prevent HUD from taking steps to roll back protections for transgender people experiencing homelessness and seeking shelter – a move that would literally put lives at risk.
- **Fair Housing Improvement Act** ([S. 1986](#), [H.R. 3516](#)) - Senator Kaine (D-VA) and Reps. Peters (D-CA), Schiff (D-CA), Grijalva (D-AZ), Serrano (D-NY), and Pressley (D-MA). If enacted, the bill would protect veterans and low-income families from housing discrimination by expanding the Fair Housing Act to prohibit housing discrimination based on source of income or veteran status.
- **Fair and Equal Housing Act** ([S. 1246](#), [H.R. 2402](#)) - Senator Kaine (D-VA) and Rep. Schneider (D-IL). The bill would prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

- **Fair Chance at Housing Act** ([S. 2076](#), [H.R. 3685](#)) – Senators Harris (D-CA) and Booker (D-NJ) and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY), . The proposal would reform the ways in which public housing authorities and owners of federally-assisted housing screen out applicants or evict tenants based on their involvement with the criminal justice system. For more details, see NLIHC’s [factsheet](#) on the FCAH Act.
- **Restoring Fair Housing Protections Eliminated by HUD Act** - Rep. Waters (D-CA). The proposal to enforce fair housing rights was crafted in response to efforts by the Trump administration to scale back fair housing protections.
- **Tenant Protection Act** - Senator Booker (D-NJ). The proposal would take important steps to reform tenant screening practices to provide people applying for rental homes the necessary protections to ensure a fair and equitable screening process.

ENSURING EQUITABLE DISASTER RECOVERY

- **Reforming Disaster Recovery Act** ([H.R. 3702](#)) – Senator Schatz (D-HI) and Young (R-IN), and Reps. Wagner (R-MO) and Green (D-TX). The bills permanently authorize and reform the federal government’s primary long-term disaster rebuilding program, the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery program, which provides states and communities with the flexible resources needed to rebuild affordable housing and infrastructure after a disaster. For more details, see NLIHC’s [factsheet](#).
- **Housing Victims of Major Disasters Act** ([S. 1605](#), [H.R. 2914](#)) - Senators Warren (D-MA) and Rep. Espaillat (D-NY). This bill would require FEMA to activate the Disaster Housing Assistance Program to provide temporary rental assistance and wrap-around services to those households displaced by disasters. See NLIHC’s [factsheet](#) on DHAP.