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# **Our Homes, Our Voices National Housing Week of Action, May 1-8**

## **Week of Action Is Fast Approaching—Get Involved!**

Twenty events across the country have so far been scheduled for the *Our Homes, Our Voices* National Housing Week of Action, May 1-8, and are posted on the campaign [website](#). To participate in an event in your community, see the events listed at: [www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org/local-events](http://www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org/local-events). If you are planning an event in your community that is not yet listed, please send along the details to: [ourhomes@nlihc.org](mailto:ourhomes@nlihc.org)

The events already planned around the country vary from rallies on the steps of state capitols and public hearings with local residents demonstrating against HUD rent increases to site visits with elected officials at affordable housing developments built with support from federal programs President Trump proposes to eliminate or cut. Two members of Congress—U.S. Representatives Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and Katherine Clark (D-MA)—have already committed to participate in *Our Homes, Our Voices* events, and many more are expected.

## **Resources**

We have developed a number of resources to assist with branding the campaign at these events and spreading the campaign's message to elected officials and on social media. The newest resource is a template PowerPoint presentation that can be used by local advocates to discuss the federal budget at local events. There are also campaign T-shirts, hats, stickers, and buttons available for [purchase](#). Order them today to ensure they get to you on time for your Week of Action activities.

## **Webinar on Preparing Local Events**

NLIHC presented a webinar on April 12 to provide updates on the federal budget and a review of the resources available to support local events for *Our Homes, Our Voices*. The webinar provided best practices for branding and social media sharing, and included some highlights from the 2017 Week of Action. A recording of the webinar is available at: [www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org/resources](http://www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org/resources)

## **National Week of Action Events**

The Campaign for Housing and Community Development (CHCDF) has scheduled a National Call-In Day for Monday, May 7, when Congress returns from recess. We encourage advocates from across the country to call their elected officials on that day to ensure they not only become aware of the campaign and the need for affordable housing and community development investments but also recognize the importance of the issue to their constituents by the number of calls received. Sample scripts will be provided in advance of the Call-In Day.

Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) is an invited speaker at a national *Our Homes, Our Voices* Week of Action press event on Tuesday, May 8. She will be joined at the event by other champions in Congress, housing advocacy leaders, and people who have benefitted from federally assisted housing. After the event, CHCDF will lead a #OurHomesOurVoices tweetstorm to further elevate the demand for greater investments in affordable homes and stronger communities.

Look for more information about national events in the coming days on the campaign website at: <https://www.ourhomes-ourvoices.org/>

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## Administration

### President Trump Signs Executive Order On Work Requirements

President Trump released on April 10 an [executive order](#) that directs federal agencies, including HUD, to consider ways to cut critical benefits, like affordable housing, that help low income households meet their basic needs. The executive order contains nine “Principles of Economic Mobility,” including imposing work requirements on recipients of government benefits programs. While the president frames the policy as a way to “promote economic mobility, strong social networks, and accountability to American taxpayers,” work requirements do not create the opportunities or decent paying jobs needed to lift people out of poverty. Rather than promoting self-sufficiency, work requirements cut struggling families off from the housing stability and services that make it possible for them to find and maintain work. Increasing economic mobility should start with expanding, not slashing, the housing assistance low income seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and other vulnerable people need.

Access to an affordable rental home is essential for economic mobility, but far too many low-income families struggle to pay rent and make ends meet. When people have a stable, decent, and accessible home that they can afford, they are better able to find employment, achieve economic mobility, perform better in school, and maintain improved health. NLIHC new [The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes](#) report finds a national shortage of more than 7 million rental homes for America’s 11 million extremely low income households. There are just 35 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 lowest income families. As a result, 71% of these families pay at least half of their incomes on rent, forcing them to make impossible choices between paying rent and buying groceries or medicine or investing in their futures through education or training. Because of chronic underfunding, three out of four families in need of housing benefits are turned away.

The Executive Order is essentially a statement of principals by the president. The proposed work requirements are non-binding and, in the case of housing programs, would require Congressional action to implement.

Read NLIHC’s statement on the president’s executive order at: <https://bit.ly/2v5fZWn>

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## Budget and Appropriations

### Trump Administration to Propose FY18 Funding Rescission Despite Opposition from Members of Congress

Current and former administration officials and others close to the White House have indicated the Trump Administration will propose cutting up to \$60 billion from the FY18 funding bill passed by Congress with bipartisan support and signed into law by the president in March. Members of Congress from both parties have weighed in against the proposal (see *Memo*, [4/9](#)), while some other House GOP members have advocated for it. The current omnibus spending package included a 10% increase for vital HUD programs.

The White House is expected to present around May 1 the proposal to claw back anywhere from \$30 billion to \$60 billion from the \$1.3 trillion spending bill. Congress would then have 45 days to pass a law codifying the cuts, known as rescissions; if they do not, the current funding law remains in effect. The administration has given no indication yet about which accounts it will propose to cut, but they are likely to be non-defense discretionary programs like those administered by HUD.

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), chair of the Transportation and HUD Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, opposed the idea, stating, “We need to get on with this year’s appropriations process, not reopen last year’s.” Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) also rejected the proposition, saying, “It’s not a perfect package. Nothing is. But as individual appropriators, I know we all worked hard on our accounts and tried to get the priorities we could.” Senate Republicans would need the support of Senators Collins and Murkowski and several others to pass a rescission bill since Democrats are unified in their opposition.

Before attending a meeting with Mr. Trump the week of April 8, Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), the new chair of the Appropriations Committee, expressed opposition to the proposal to rescind funds included in the omnibus. “We need to look at what we agreed on with the other side and keep our word, keep our agreements,” he said. Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), chair of the House Appropriations Committee, agreed. “My attitude is, your word is your bond,” he said. Representative Tom Cole (R-OK) said the idea is “unrealistic and dangerous.” On the other hand, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), who is vying to become the next speaker of the House when Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) relinquishes the post and retires from Congress, is said to be working with the White House on the rescission proposal.

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## **CHCDF Thanks THUD Appropriations Leadership for HUD Funding Increase**

The Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding (CHCDF) sent a letter signed by 50 national organizations thanking House and Senate subcommittee appropriations leadership for the 10% increase in funding provided to HUD in FY18. While the February budget agreement increased overall spending limits, the letter acknowledges the significant efforts made by the chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) to ensure HUD received its fair share.

Senate Subcommittee Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) and Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-RI) and House Subcommittee Chair Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Ranking Member David Price (D-NC) rejected cuts proposed by the Trump administration and provided strong funding for critical HUD programs. This success stems from these members’ commitment to affordable housing and community development as well as the tireless efforts of advocates over the past year.

“We are hopeful that the Consolidated Omnibus Appropriations Act 2018 represents a turning point for HUD’s critical housing and community development programs and look forward to working with you toward a strong fiscal year 2019 HUD funding bill,” the letter states. CHCDF is an NLIHC-led coalition of more than 70 national organizations that work to ensure the highest allocation of resources possible to support affordable housing and community development. Members represent a full continuum of national housing and community development organizations, including faith-based, private sector, financial/intermediary, public sector, and other advocacy groups.

Read CHCDF’s letter in full at: <https://bit.ly/2JGACv9>

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## **Senator Collins Remains Chair of THUD Appropriations Subcommittee**

Following the retirement of Senate Appropriations Chair Thad Cochran (R-MS) at the beginning of April, Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL) was selected to serve as the new chair. As committee chair, Senator Shelby reorganized the subcommittees’ chairmanships. Despite the shake-up, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) will continue to chair the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee. Ms. Collins, a consistent champion for affordable housing, played a critical role in securing a 10% increase in funding for HUD in FY18.

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## House Appropriations Subcommittee to Hold Budget Hearing on Public and Indian Housing

The House Appropriations Subcommittee for Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies will hold a FY19 budget hearing for the Office of Public and Indian Housing. Public and Indian Housing Acting Assistant Secretary Dominique Blom will answer questions regarding President Trump's budget proposal as well as the needs of the office, which coordinates HUD's public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs, among others. The hearing will be held on April 17 at 9:30 am ET in room 2358-A of the Rayburn House office building. Learn more about the hearing at: <https://bit.ly/2GQuzT6>

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## Senate Subcommittee to Hold Hearing on HUD Funding for FY19

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies will hold a hearing on HUD's FY19 budget request on April 18. Witnesses for the hearing have not been announced. The hearing will be at 2:30pm ET in room 430 of the Dirksen Senate office building.

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## Congress

### House Financial Services Subcommittee to Hold Hearing on Housing Choice Vouchers

The House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance will hold an oversight hearing on the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. The hearing will review legislative proposals to modify the program. The hearing will be held on April 17 at 2:00 pm ET in room 2128 of the Rayburn House office building.

Hearing witnesses are:

- Barbara Sard, Vice President for Housing Policy, Center for Budget & Policy Priorities
- Ruth White, Executive Director, National Center for Housing & Child Welfare
- Lynn Kovich, Deputy Secretary, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
- Dean Hammond, Board Member, Foundation for Affordable Housing in Kentucky

Learn more about the hearing at: <https://bit.ly/2GQq9vo>

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## Opportunity Starts at Home

### ***“Opportunity Starts at Home”* Campaign Offers Fact Sheets and Resources on Connections between Housing and Other Sectors**

The [Opportunity Starts at Home](#) campaign is building a coalition of stakeholders from many different sectors to generate widespread support for federal policies that protect and expand affordable housing. The campaign aims to broaden the movement for affordable homes. New [fact sheets and other resources](#) on the connections between housing and other sectors are available to help those interested in participating in the campaign to build the movement.

Leaders and advocates in other sectors beyond housing are increasingly realizing that affordable homes are inextricably linked to their own priorities and goals, and they are joining the *Opportunity Starts at Home* campaign. The research continues to mount that housing is inextricably linked to nearly every measure of a quality life – education, health care, civil rights, economic mobility, poverty reduction, economic productivity and growth, social unity, homeless prevention, veterans’ wellbeing, and more.

The *Opportunity Starts at Home* [website](#) provides powerful research to help policymakers and the public understand the deep connections between affordable housing and these other priorities. To see fact sheets, infographics, and more, check out the following “sector” pages:

- [Health & Housing](#)
- [Education & Housing](#)
- [Civil Rights & Housing](#)
- [Economic Mobility & Housing](#)
- [Economic Productivity & Housing](#)
- [Homelessness & Housing](#)
- [Criminal Justice & Housing](#)
- [Veterans & Housing](#)

More sector pages, like ones on “Hunger & Housing” and “Immigration & Housing,” are in the works. For updates on the campaign, be sure to follow on Twitter: @OppStartsatHome #OpportunityStartsatHome

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## **Disaster Housing Recovery**

### **HUD Allocates \$28 Billion for Disaster Recovery**

HUD awarded \$28 billion in Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds to support long-term disaster recovery—the second and last allocation of what Congress appropriated in the FY18 disaster supplemental appropriations. While Congress provided up to \$16 billion to address unmet needs, HUD allocated only \$12 billion for this purpose. The remaining \$4 billion was allocated to address future disaster mitigation, bringing all mitigation dollars to \$16 billion. At this time, it is unclear whether the \$12 billion allocation provides sufficient resources to address the unmet needs in disaster-impacted areas.

Of the \$12 billion allocated for unmet needs, HUD provided \$124 million for California, \$157.7 million for Florida, \$37.9 million for Georgia, \$58.5 million for Missouri, \$10.15 billion for Puerto Rico, \$652 million for Texas, and \$846.8 million for the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The awards for unmet needs and mitigation can be found at: <https://bit.ly/2Hu24fc>

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## **Representatives Espaillat and González Introduce Bill to Provide Housing for Disaster Survivors**

Representatives Adriano Espaillat (D-NY) and Jenniffer González-Colón (R-PR) introduced on April 11 the “Housing Victims of Major Disaster Act” ([H.R. 5474](#)). This bill would require FEMA and HUD to immediately stand up the Disaster Housing Assistance Program ([DHAP](#)) to provide low income displaced families with safe, decent, and affordable rental homes while they rebuild their lives and get back on their feet. DHAP was created after the hard-won lessons from Hurricane Katrina and has been used following other disasters, including Hurricane Rita and Superstorm Sandy, but despite the program’s past success, FEMA has not allowed DHAP to be implemented for victims of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

The bill also includes provisions expanding the documentation options FEMA will consider when approving housing assistance. This critical change is needed to help survivors in Puerto Rico and Texas who lack formal titles to their homes and have been denied FEMA assistance.

“This legislation would ensure that all survivors of the recent hurricanes and wildfires – including those with the lowest incomes – have the resources they need to keep stable roofs over their heads while they rebuild their lives,” said Diane Yentel, NLIHC president and CEO. “The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition of more than 700 local, state, and national organizations commends Congressman Espaillat and Congresswoman González Colón for their leadership in putting forward critically needed, long-term housing solutions so that in the future, no family recovering from a disaster has to make the impossible choice between paying rent and meeting their other basic needs as they get back on their feet.”

Read Representative Espaillat’s statement about the bill at: <https://bit.ly/2HeF6ed>

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## **Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Holds Hearing on FEMA**

FEMA Administrator Brock Long [testified](#) at an April 11 Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hearing, “FEMA: Prioritizing a Culture of Preparedness.” Mr. Long pledged to reduce the complexity of FEMA’s processes to improve emergency management in the future. He emphasized the importance of FEMA partnerships with state and local governments to identify appropriate sheltering and housing solutions, citing Texas as a model. Mr. Long posed the question, “How do we become a granting agency to push the funds out to governors for emergency assistance?”

Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) asked about the challenges posed by “informal” housing in Puerto Rico in which residents do not possess formal titles to their properties or leases for rental units. Mr. Brock acknowledged this issue as an example of how the previous way of doing business is not responsive to jurisdictional differences. “States have a much better familiarity with the needs of their residents, the local laws and ordinances that can impact some of the FEMA housing options,” he said. Senator James Lankford (R-OK) requested a copy of a pending evaluation report from 2017 so that lawmakers can propose legislative changes to address issues inhibiting FEMA from doing its work effectively.

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## **Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition Provides Recommendations for CDBG-DR Authorization Bill**

The NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHCR) sent a [letter](#) to House Financial Services Chair Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) and Representative Ann Wagner (R-MO) regarding a bill that would authorize the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program. The letter provides recommendations regarding data transparency, efficient use of limited resources, oversight, mitigation and resiliency, and other suggestions to ensure the needs of low income households are addressed. Representative Wagner introduced in December 2017 the “Reforming Disaster Recovery Act of 2018” ([H.R. 1557](#)), which will most likely be voted on in committee at the end of April. Read the DHCR letter at: <https://bit.ly/2GQ9ckO>

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## **Texas Releases State Action Plan for \$5 Billion in CDBG-DR**

The Texas General Land Office (GLO), which coordinates the state’s disaster recovery efforts, released a [Hurricane Harvey Action Plan](#) for the distribution of \$5.024 billion in Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funds. The resources come from the first disaster supplemental appropriation Congress passed in September 2017. As required by HUD guidance posted in the *Federal Register* in February, the draft of the state action plan is open for [public comment](#) through April 26, 2018. Texas GLO previously



released a State Action Plan for an earlier allocation of \$57.8 million, which it submitted to HUD in early March. Read the “Hurricane Harvey State Action Plan–Round 1” at: <https://bit.ly/2JC2b91>

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## **Senators Request Hearing on Power Restoration in Puerto Rico**

Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Bob Casey (D-PA), and Tom Carper (D-DE) sent a [letter](#) to the chair and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA), requesting additional hearings on recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, particularly those related to power restoration. The Army Corps of Engineers, which has been coordinating efforts to repair the island’s electric grid, is reportedly reducing the number of workers in Puerto Rico, despite the fact that many residents still lack reliable power. Read the letter at: <https://bit.ly/2vbmneR>

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## **Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition Develops Online Tool to Collect Disaster Recovery Stories**

To increase the responsiveness of federal disaster housing programs, the NLIHC-led Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition (DHCR) of more than 700 organizations has developed an online tool for capturing individual stories of disaster survivors. These accounts of unmet need will be collected for use with policymakers and the media to illustrate the unique housing challenges low income disaster survivors face and to build support for solutions. The DHCR asks legal aid, advocacy, and other organizations serving disaster survivors from the hurricanes and wildfires of 2017 to help the coalition collect these stories by filling out the [online questionnaire](#) for any client/individual with a compelling need for direct rental assistance. The online survey is at: <https://bit.ly/2qoyKhX>

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## **Additional Updates on Disaster Housing Recovery – April 16**

The following is a review of additional housing recovery developments related to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, and the California wildfires since last week’s *Memo to Members and Partners* (for the article in last week’s *Memo*, see [4/9](#)). NLIHC also posts this information at our [On the Home Front](#) blog.

### **General Updates**

The [Office of Public and Indian Housing \(PIH\)](#) has compiled a [spreadsheet](#) with information on public housing authorities (PHAs) providing preferences for households displaced by the 2017 disasters. The spreadsheet is a resource for families, PHAs, and HUD staff. PHAs wishing to supply additional or corrected information should contact the [disaster preference project team](#).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that the [2017 Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program](#), authorized by the “Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018”, will make payments of up to \$2.36 billion to farmers and ranchers recovering from the 2017 disasters. The opportunity to sign up for the program will begin no later than July 16.

### **Hurricane Maria**

#### **FEMA**

FEMA and Puerto Rico Governor Ricardo Rosselló announced on April 7 that [\\$53 million](#) in Community Disaster Loans were approved for 12 municipalities. An additional 65 municipalities are in different stages of the application process.

## Hurricane Harvey

### Local Perspective

The Rebuild Texas Fund has raised \$93.1 million for economic recovery of communities most affected by Hurricane Harvey. So far, the Fund has invested \$18 million in 64 projects. Details of the projects funded can be found [here](#).

The Texas GLO announced that the agency will soon [complete activities](#) for the Direct Assistance for Limited Home Repair (DALHR) program. The last date to have an inspection scheduled is April 20. All applicants notified that they are eligible for DALHR should contact the GLO to schedule an inspection.

### From Our Partners

The National Church Residences' Hurricane Support for Seniors Hotline is no longer taking new referrals. Disaster case management teams have been deployed to the affected areas to serve seniors in need. The hotline helped more than 700 seniors, and staff are ready to re-engage for the 2018 hurricane season, if necessary.

The Data Center, located in New Orleans, LA, released a new report, [Rigging the Real Estate Market: Segregation, Inequality, and Disaster Risk](#). The study explores how various policies—including disaster recovery efforts—created and enforced racial segregation and inequity.

The Center for American Progress explores the inequities in disaster recovery past and present in this [article](#).

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## HUD

### DOJ and HUD Launch National Initiative to Combat Sexual Harassment in Housing

Attorney General Jeff Sessions and HUD Secretary Ben Carson announced on April 12 a nationwide initiative aimed at increasing awareness and reporting of sexual harassment in housing. HUD and the Department of Justice will form a new interagency task force, create an outreach toolkit, and launch a public awareness campaign. These efforts are a national extension of an initiative Mr. Sessions ordered last October to combat sexual harassment in housing with pilot programs in D.C. and the Western District of Virginia. The pilot programs generated an increase in harassment reporting and resulted in legal relief for 15 victims, according to Mr. Sessions. Read more about the DOJ and HUD initiative at: <https://bit.ly/2IOF3mA>

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## Research

### College Students Face Housing and Food Insecurity

College students responding to a survey by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab reveal a high degree of housing and food insecurity. Forty-six percent of students at two-year community colleges and 36% at four-year colleges experienced some degree of housing insecurity during the past year. Twelve percent and 9% of students at two-year community colleges and four-year colleges, respectively, experienced homelessness. These results are included in a new report, [Still Hungry and Homeless in College](#).

Forty-three thousand students from 31 community colleges and 35 four-year colleges voluntarily responded to questions about housing and food insecurity. Housing insecurity was defined broadly to include people who

have difficulty paying rent, who are forced to move frequently, or who live in crowded conditions to pay the rent. Food insecurity was defined as limited access to nutritious food.

In the past year, 21% of community-college students and 13% of four-year college students had a rent increase that made their housing costs difficult to pay. Eighteen percent of community college students and 10% of four-year college students were unable to pay their rent in full. Eleven percent of community college students and 7% of four-year college students lived in overcrowded living arrangements. Seven percent of community college students and 6% of 4-year college students did not know where they would sleep for at least one night during the past year.

Twenty-two percent of community college students and 16% of 4-year college students were both food and housing insecure. Housing insecurity can lead to food insecurity: when housing costs increase, students have less money to spend on food or they may move to less expensive neighborhoods with fewer available food options. Female, non-heterosexual, black, Hispanic, and Native American students were more likely to experience food or housing insecurity than male, heterosexual, and white students.

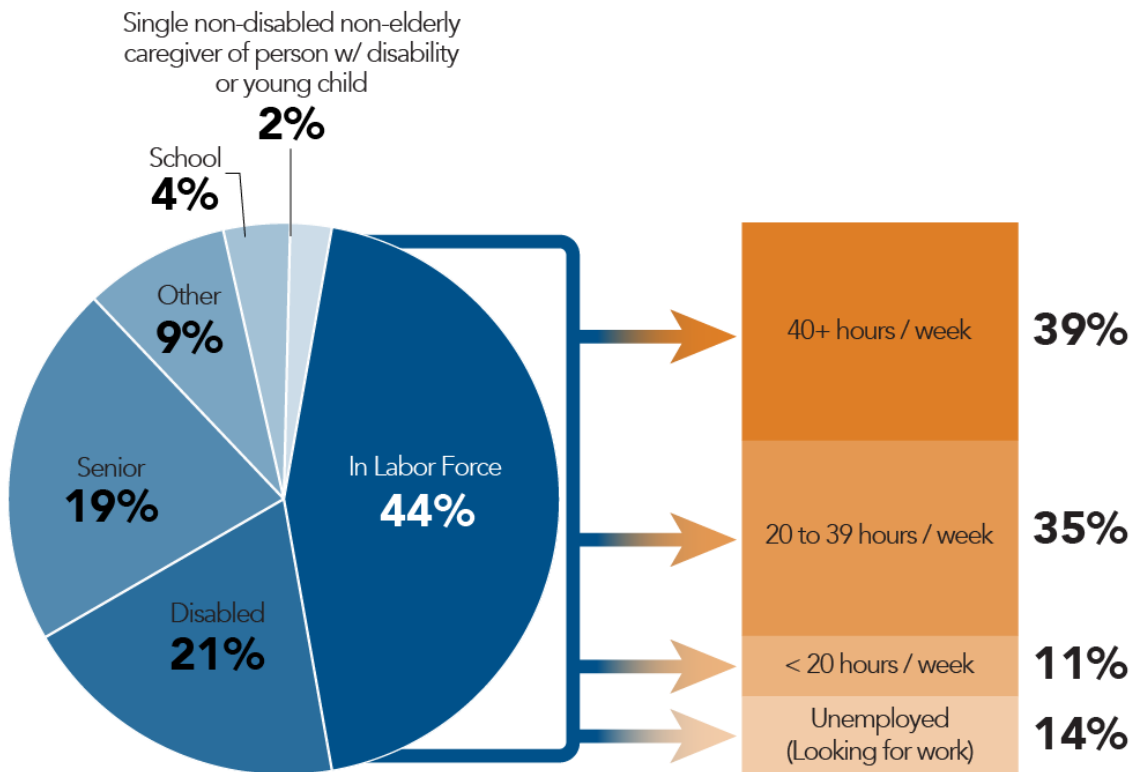
*Still Hungry and Homeless in College* is available at: <https://bit.ly/2H72k3f>

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## **Fact of the Week**

**Nine in Ten Severely Housing Cost-Burdened Extremely Low Income Renter Households are Seniors, People with Disabilities, Care Givers, or Involved in Labor Force or School**

# Severely Cost Burdened Extremely Low Income Renter Households



Note: Mutually exclusive categories applied in the following order: senior, disabled, in labor force, enrolled in school, single-adult caregiver, and other. Senior means householder or householder's spouse (if applicable) is at least 62 years of age. Disabled means householder and householder's spouse (if applicable) are younger than 62 and at least one of them has a disability. Unemployed means household and householder's spouse (if applicable) are younger than 62 and unemployed. Working hours is usual number of hours worked by householder and householder's spouse (if applicable). Enrolled in school means householder and householder's spouse (if applicable) are enrolled in school. Nearly 11% of severely cost burdened extremely low income renters are single-adult caregivers of a young child or disabled person, three-quarters of whom are in the labor force and three percent of whom are in school. Source: 2016 ACS PUMS. ©2018 National Low Income Housing Coalition

Source: NLIHC's *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, 2018.

## From the Field

### Homelessness Advocacy Day in Michigan Calls for Increased Investment and Decreased Criminalization

More than 120 advocates from throughout Michigan convened in Lansing on April 11 to call for expanded rights and services for people experiencing homelessness. The second annual Homelessness Advocacy Day provided training, factsheets, and talking points to support the lobbying efforts of shelter providers, people with first-hand experience being homeless, and their allies. The event was organized by Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH), one of NLIHC's newest state partners.



*A crowd of homelessness advocates gathers in Lansing on April 11.*

Advocates met with 73 legislative offices, and presented advocacy materials in offices where they were unable to get on the calendar, covering all 110 representatives and all 38 senators. At each lobby meeting, advocates invited legislators to join upcoming policy roundtables in their respective communities to discuss housing affordability. At the Homelessness Advocacy Day debrief session, advocates indicated a growing awareness among legislators on homelessness policy interventions and a strong interest by lawmakers in an ongoing conversation.

The primary requests to legislators on Homelessness Advocacy Day fell into five categories: making it easier to obtain state IDs; expanding access to vital documents like birth certificates; decriminalizing homelessness; supporting affordable housing programs; and increasing funding for homeless services. To support these requests, MCAH provided advocates with key data from the state's 2016 annual report. The data demonstrate the effectiveness of homeless services and housing programs, showing a 9% decrease in homelessness since 2014.

Advocates spoke in support of a proposed amendment to Senate Bill 404 which will add people experiencing homelessness as well as veterans to the eligibility list for Michigan's "Free ID for Me" program. The Secretary of State's office oversees Free ID for ME, which waives all fees for state identification cards. The program currently serves individuals who are blind, are over the age of 65, or have had their driver's license suspended due to mental or physical disabilities. Expanding access to state identification cards is a high priority for MCAH advocates because access to supportive services and benefits usually requires this basic proof of identification. MCAH estimates that more than 30,000 people have been denied Social Security income, Medicaid, or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program assistance (food stamps), due to their lack of state identification.

Access to birth records are a similar barrier for many people experiencing homelessness. In a 2017 survey of homeless service providers, birth certificates were identified as the most difficult vital document for a homeless person to acquire. Currently, birth certificates cost \$34 when they are accessed through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Service's (MDHHS) Vital Docs office. Advocates are pushing for the passage of House Bills 5418 and 5584, both of which include provisions allowing County Clerks to charge only the local fees for birth certificates, which average \$13.38.

According to MCAH, 3,307 homeless individuals spent time in jail during 2017 as a result of their homelessness. In some cases, these stays were intentional. Thirty-nine percent of shelter staff members surveyed indicate they were aware of homeless individuals who committed imprisonable offenses just to have an opportunity for a warm bed in jail. To reduce recidivism by ex-offenders, advocates also urge legislators to recognize the importance of housing availability for returning prisoners. In Michigan, data show that formerly incarcerated individuals are twice as likely to recidivate when they do not have stable housing. To reduce criminalization, House Bill 4798 would allow for expungement of multiple convictions that arise from the same criminal infraction. For example, a person would not have a criminal record for a trespassing violation, a second one for failing to pay a fine for that same offense, and a third for a probation-violation stemming from the same instance. Too often, criminal records are structured to indicate a much more extensive history of criminal behavior than what actually occurred.

Advocates additionally emphasized the importance of programs that support housing affordability, but they did not request additional state-level funding since the current Michigan appropriations process does not include a housing budget committee, with the majority of homeless services funded with federal dollars. Rather, advocates are advancing Senate Bill 110 which allows municipalities to offer various incentives for more affordable housing affordability, incentives that have been banned statewide.

The big funding request during Homelessness Advocacy Day was for homeless services. Specifically, advocates asked that the legislature increase MDHHS funding for homelessness to \$20 per shelter night from the current level of \$16. By comparison, advocates shared that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pays \$43.32 per shelter night.

“We are so delighted to have so many dedicated and active advocates throughout Michigan,” said Eric Hufnagel, executive director at MCAH. “This was only our second annual advocacy day, but we are already seeing progress in many legislative offices. Our task now is to continue to build these relationships and cultivate new legislative champions.”

For more information about Homelessness Advocacy Day and priority policy requests in Michigan, contact Laurel Burchfield, MCAH’s manager for marketing, growth & development at: [lburchfield@mihomeless.org](mailto:lburchfield@mihomeless.org). Follow Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness on Twitter @mihomeless #EndMIHomelessness.

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## Resource

### National Database of Evictions Released

The [Eviction Lab](#) at Princeton University released the first national database of court eviction records in the United States. The Lab’s data include nearly 83 million court records related to evictions from 2000 to 2016. The Lab’s website includes a mapping tool showing eviction rates and eviction filing rates by state or county and city rankings for evictions, and the website allows users to download eviction and demographic data for states, counties, cities, and census tracts.

The Eviction Lab is led by Matthew Desmond, the author of the Pulitzer-prize winning book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American city*, which raised awareness about evictions with the public and policy-makers nationwide.

The Eviction Lab is available at: [evictionlab.org](http://evictionlab.org)

A *New York Times* article on the Eviction Lab is available at: <https://nyti.ms/2GDGfwd>

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## Event

### Pre-Event Registration for May 7-11 NeighborWorks Training Institute in Kansas City Closes April 16

Pre-event registration for the May 7-11 NeighborWorks Training Institute (NTI) in Kansas City, MO, ends April 16. The NTI offers more than 100 course offerings in affordable housing development and financing; housing asset management; community engagement; community revitalization; community economic development; housing construction and rehabilitation; financial capability and homeownership education, coaching, and counseling; nonprofit management and leadership; and single-family and small business lending. The NTI courses, lasting from one-to-five days each, are an excellent opportunity for skill-building and networking. More information about the NTI is at: <http://bit.ly/2BwPLxI>. Register for the NTI by April 16 at: <http://bit.ly/1ATs8Ia>.

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## NLIHC in the News

### NLIHC in the News for the Week of April 8

The following are some of the news stories that NLIHC contributed to during the week of April 8:

- “Trump doesn’t ignore fair housing and public assistance programs — unfortunately,” *The Washington Post*, April 13 at: <https://wapo.st/2GVevDu>
  - “Eviction rate spikes again across Phoenix as affordable-housing crisis worsens,” *The Arizona Republic*, April 13 at: <https://bit.ly/2qw0mln>
  - “Trump issues executive order on work requirements,” *Curbed*, April 12 at: <https://bit.ly/2HyKjv1>
  - “The fierce urgency of fair and affordable homes,” *Washington Examiner*, April 11 at: <https://washex.am/2EDgruo>
  - “Fair Housing Act Anniversary: Trump and His Father Were Sued for Racial Discrimination, and These People Still Want an Apology,” *Newsweek*, April 11 at: <https://bit.ly/2HztakO>
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## NLIHC News

### NLIHC Seeks Housing Advocacy Organizer

NLIHC is accepting applications for the position of housing advocacy organizer. As a member of the NLIHC field team, the housing advocacy organizer mobilizes NLIHC members on federal policy advocacy based on NLIHC’s approved policy agenda, assists in the design and implementation of campaign field strategies, and conducts outreach activities in specific states. The organizer will spend significant time developing and retaining NLIHC membership; increasing endorsements for NLIHC campaigns; and mobilizing NLIHC membership, state coalition partners, and other advocates on “calls to action” and other organizing efforts in support of socially just affordable housing policy that ensures the lowest income people in the U.S. have decent, affordable homes.

The position requires strong written and oral communication skills and excellent electronic technology skills, including proficiency in the Microsoft Office suite, database management, and social media use. Some familiarity with customer relationship management systems like Salesforce would be a plus. Priority consideration will be given to candidates with proven organizing experience mobilizing a community or

constituent base at a national, state, or local level. Some knowledge of federal housing policy is a plus. A bachelor's degree is required. The position is based in Washington, DC. Some travel is required.

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

Interested candidates should submit by email ([rwillis@nlihc.org](mailto:rwillis@nlihc.org)) a cover letter with salary requirements, resume, and two writing samples to Renee Willis, vice president for field and communications, National Low Income Housing Coalition, 1000 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20005.

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## Where to Find Us – April 16

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

- Ohio Regional Community Development Conference, Washington, DC on April 17
- [South Carolina Housing Conference](#), Columbia, SC, April 17-18
- Annual Summit for Fair Housing, Mobile, AL on April 19
- [AHF Forum](#), New Orleans, LA on April 26
- [Howard County Housing Symposium](#); Progressive HoCo, Columbia, MD on April 28
- Housing Alliance of Delaware's Day for Housing Event, Dover, DE on May 3
- Provider Alliance to End Homelessness, Los Angeles, CA on May 17
- [Conference on Ending Homelessness](#), Yakima, WA, May 22-23
- [2018 Denver Housing Summit](#), Denver, CO on May 24
- [Maryland Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies \(MAHRA\) Annual Conference](#), Ocean City, Maryland on May 24
- [Virginia Housing Alliance Annual Luncheon](#), Richmond, VA on June 14
- [Florida Housing Coalition Annual Conference](#), Orlando, FL on August 27
- [Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia: Reinventing Our Communities: Investing in Opportunity](#), Baltimore, MD on October 1

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## NLIHC Staff

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Victoria Bourret, Housing Advocacy Organizer, x244

Josephine Clarke, Executive Assistant, x226

Dan Emmanuel, Senior Research Analyst, x316

Ellen Errico, Creative Services Manager, x246

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Emma Kerr, Research Intern, x229

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Lisa Marlow, Communications Specialist, x239

Lauren McMahan, Graphic Design and Communications Intern, x252

Sarah Mickelson, Senior Director of Public Policy, x228

Isaiah Milbauer, Field Intern, x252

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Christina Sin, Development Manager, x234  
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