

**Volume 21, Issue 17**  
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**In This Issue:**

**POINT OF VIEW BY SHEILA CROWLEY**

**NATIONAL HOUSING TRUST FUND**

- HUD Issues NHTF Allocation Plan Guidance
- NLIHC's Model NHTF Allocation Plan and Developer Advisory Group

**FEDERAL BUDGET**

- Senate Consideration of THUD Spending Bill Delayed
- House Still Locked in Budget Battle, Senate Considers Reforms

**CONGRESS**

- Bill Introduced to Remove Housing Barriers for People with Criminal Records
- Advocates Urge Senate Passage of Housing Modernization Act
- House Conservatives Release Poverty Agenda, Urge Housing Reforms
- NAEH and Congressional Homeless Caucus Host Hill Briefing

**HUD**

- PHAs Awarded Grants to Help Justice-Involved Youth Find Housing and Jobs

**HOUSING IN THE ELECTIONS**

- Advocates Thank Candidates for Visiting Public Housing, Request Follow up Meetings
- NLIHC Reprises Voterization Webinars

**RESEARCH**

- Federal Housing Assistance Declines Despite Increase in Need

**FACT OF THE WEEK**

- Change in Funding for Federal Housing Programs since 2010

**FROM THE FIELD**

- Washington State Budget Takes Small Steps on Homelessness, Much More Needed

**RESOURCES**

- Short Video Explains Fair Housing Disparate Impact

**EVENTS**

- Matthew Desmond Addresses Evictions in the U.S.
- Consortium for Housing and Asset Management Annual Conference, June 27-29

## **NLIHC NEWS**

- NLIHC Seeking Director of Public Policy

## Point of View by Sheila Crowley

When you read this, I will have spent my last day as a staff member of the National Low Income Housing Coalition. After 17-plus years here and 40 some years at this work, I have retired, at least for the time being. I want each of you to know how thankful I am for your support, your friendship, and your commitment to our mission. You have been very generous to NLIHC and to me personally, and I am grateful.

What follows is an adaptation of the “farewell” speech I gave on April 4 at our annual Housing Policy Forum.

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This is my 18<sup>th</sup> and final NLIHC annual conference as president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition. It doesn't seem possible that so much time has passed. It is wonderful to see so many old friends and make new friends. But it is sad to think about all the people we have lost – Edward Brooke, Dorothy Robinson, Peaches Manning, Paulette Turner, Anne Bradshaw, Patty Rouse...and of course, the godmother of our movement, Cushing Dolbeare. I know their spirit is here with us and they are pleased that we continue to come together to advance our great cause.

As I prepare to leave NLIHC, I want to share a few thoughts about what has changed over the years and where we are going.

In 1998, the federal budget had a surplus of \$125 billion; today, we have a deficit of \$616 billion. Imagine the progress we could have made if that surplus had not been squandered on war and tax cuts.

In 1998, the national two-bedroom housing wage was \$11.86 an hour. When NLIHC releases the 2016 edition of *Out of Reach* in May, it will show that the national two-bedroom housing wage is \$20.17 an hour.

The sad fact is that the problem NLIHC exists to solve is much worse today than it was in 1998. At NLIHC, we name this problem “housing poverty.” Housing poverty a condition experienced by a person or a family of not having enough money to pay the monthly cost of a modest, decent home and also pay for food, medicine and other basic needs. It also is a condition experienced by a community that fails to provide sufficient modest, decent housing for all its members, so that some members are forced to live in unsafe, unstable housing or go without housing altogether to pay for food, medicine, and other basic needs.

Why housing poverty is worse is no mystery – there are more poor people. In 1999, there were 7.7 million extremely low income renter households. By 2014, there were 10.4 extremely low income renter households. As the same time, there are fewer homes these families can afford. For every 100 extremely low income renter households in the U.S., there are just 31 homes that are both affordable and available to them.

So whatever victories we claim – building new units, revitalizing public housing, ending homelessness among veterans, improving systems – if we are honest, we have to acknowledge that we are not making a dent. Unless and until we do something big and bold to reverse these numbers, our efforts to educate all our children, to assure a life of dignity for all our elders and our neighbors with disabilities, and to do all the things that a great country should do will fail.

Here are my ten observations that I hope offer optimism and challenges:

1. In 1998, housing discourse and policy was all about home ownership. The narrative was that homeownership was the answer to generational poverty. Homeowners were winners; therefore, renters were losers. I am proud that NLIHC did not succumb to the pressure to forego advocacy for rental housing and jump on the homeownership train. If there is any silver lining to the Great Recession, it is

the recognition that a healthy housing market makes room for both homeowners and **renters**, and that both are legitimate forms of housing tenure and worthy of support.

2. Today, we have much greater acceptance of the fact that **homelessness is a housing condition** first. The narrative in the early 2000s pathologized homelessness. Today, we are less likely to dichotomize housing and homelessness, and we see homelessness as one gradation of the core problem - housing poverty.
3. When I first started at NLIHC, those who called for **deep income targeting** in housing programs were the fringe of the housing community. Flexibility for housing providers was the mantra of the day. We had to fight like hell to keep deep income targeting in the National Housing Trust Fund bill, fending off attempts to weaken it, even by some of our friends. We were told that if you want to help the poorest, you have help everyone else and somehow it will trickle down. Today, few deny the data that the biggest housing problem is among the lowest income people. I do not make causal assertions casually, but I know that NLIHC is responsible for moving the focus to the shortage of rental housing that extremely low income households can afford.
4. We got a new low income housing program enacted that at long last will be implemented this year. The **National Housing Trust Fund** is the first new low income housing program since 1990. Of course, I am extremely disappointed that the amount of money in the first year is small compared to the need and to what we envisioned when we started the campaign in 2000. The challenge for all of you is to make sure the first two years of the program are a smashing success and to hold the line on at least \$4 billion a year for the National Housing Trust Fund as was in the Johnson-Crapo housing finance reform bill in 2014, when housing finance reform inevitably happens.
5. The **mortgage interest deduction** is no longer sacrosanct. Lots of people now say out loud that it has to change. Questioning the mortgage interest deduction was a lonely space that Cushing occupied for a long time; she would be very pleased with how far we have come. Think about this: Even if all we do is move the cap from million dollar mortgages to a mere half million dollars, thus raising taxes on at most 5% of homeowners, we would have \$95 billion over 10 years to invest in reducing housing poverty. And we can do much better with other modest changes. Mortgage interest deduction reform is inevitable. Reinvestment of the savings in low income housing is not. Your challenge will be to keep at least some of this money in housing.
6. Speaking of big money, the United States spends \$80 billion a year to house 2.2 million people in our prisons and jails. As we have incarcerated more poor black and brown men over the last 20 years, prisons have become a de facto part of our low income housing system. We are now at a moment when this injustice may be addressed with bipartisan agreement that we have gone too far. We have to make sure that housing is part of **criminal justice reform**.

And the housing response has to be more than making it easier for people coming out of prison to access existing affordable housing, because we know there already is not enough housing for everyone in need. The response has to be about redirecting some of the money we spend on prisons to housing and jobs so that people will succeed when they come home. Let's not repeat what happened when we deinstitutionalized public psychiatric hospitals in the 1970s and 80s without a community-based housing plan.

7. Speaking directly to NLIHC members who are **residents of public housing**, I hope you know how important you are to me and to the power of NLIHC. I know that too often your homes and communities are disparaged by outsiders and that you are angry about disinvestment in the nation's aging public housing stock. You know that without public housing, you and millions of others would be much worse

off competing in the private rental housing market. No wonder you fight like hell to protect your homes. But public housing will survive to serve another generation only if the federal government commits to housing policies that assures decent and affordable homes for all low income people. So please put the considerable skills you have honed as advocates to protect your own homes to also demanding an end to housing poverty for all.

8. Last year was momentous in housing history with the U.S. Supreme Court decision on disparate impact and the new **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing** rule. The advance in fair housing is one of the great accomplishments of the Obama Administration.

We finally have new tools to combat housing discrimination against people who are members of the protected classes. And because objecting to low income housing often is thinly veiled bias against people of color, the affirmatively furthering fair housing rule will help expand affordable rental housing and therefore housing choice for low income people. Please embrace this rule and make it work in your communities.

9. **Income inequality** is no longer the subject of dry discourse in DC think tanks and academia. From Occupy Wall Street to the Sanders campaign, income inequality is now the central moral issue of our time. There's enough wealth in our country for everyone to enjoy a basic standard of living. Better pay and better benefits are essential to ending housing poverty.
10. Finally, although the low income housing shortage has never been worse, I know I am leaving **NLIHC** at a time when your coalition has never been stronger. You have a terrific board, generous and loyal funders, a growing membership, and a solid reputation for integrity and commitment. You have a fabulous staff of talented, passionate, hardworking advocates. And I leave NLIHC with great confidence in its future under the leadership of Diane Yentel, who I know you will embrace with affection and respect. Diane is the future of our movement, deeply grounded in where we have come from and full of new ideas and new energy to move our agenda forward. Diane is the right person at the right time to take NLIHC to new heights and great victories.

One last thought...in the words of Nelson Mandela, "it always seems impossible until it's done."

## **National Housing Trust Fund**

### **HUD Issues NHTF Allocation Plan Guidance**

The long-awaited NHTF Allocation Plan guidance from HUD was posted as Notice CPD-16-07 on April 28. The seven-page Notice primarily restates the interim regulations, with a few exceptions.

The statute creating the NHTF requires that each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico select a state entity, such as a housing finance agency or housing department, to receive NHTF money and administer the state's NHTF program. Late last week HUD posted the final two state designations on its NHTF webpage. The statute also requires that these designated entities draft a NHTF Allocation Plan, notify the public about it and provide for public comment – all following Consolidated Plan (ConPlan) public participation regulations.

The statute requires states to give priority in awarding NHTF money to applicant organizations based on six factors. One of those factors is geographic diversity. The Notice goes beyond the interim rule for geographic diversity by adding, "The state's geographic distribution priorities must be consistent with the state's certification that it will affirmatively further fair housing and any applicable Analysis of Impediments." Unfortunately, HUD's guidance does not help states concerned about how to comply with the geographic diversity requirement given that their 2016 NHTF allocation will likely be very modest (NLIHC estimates that most states will be receiving close to \$3 million).

Another one of the six priority factors is the length of time a NHTF-assisted unit will remain affordable. The Notice goes beyond the interim rule by adding, “The funding priority in the NHTF allocation plan should consider how project underwriting supports the financial feasibility of the project beyond the required 30-year period.”

For states that have already submitted their ConPlan Annual Action Plan, Notice CPD-16-07 indicates that those states must submit their NHTF Allocation Plan as an amendment to the state’s ConPlan Annual Action plan no later than August 16. Treatment of the NHTF Allocation Plan as simply an amendment to the ConPlan Annual Action Plan seems to contradict two previous HUD FAQs (see <http://bit.ly/1T8kBu1> and *Memo*, [6/29/15](#), [8/31/15](#)) issued last summer that stated the NHTF Allocation Plan would have to be a “substantial amendment” to the Annual Action Plan. A substantial amendment triggers a required 30-day review and comment period, while an amendment does not. Advocates must ensure their state has at least a 30-day review and comment period even if the NHTF Allocation Plan is not considered a substantial amendment.

Notice CPD-16-07 directs states to revise the affordable housing section of the five-year Strategic Plan portion of their ConPlan. The revision must include specific objectives that describe the proposed housing accomplishments the state plans to achieve and specify the number of extremely low income families, as defined in the NHTF rule, for whom it will provide affordable housing over a specific period of time. For each objective, the state must identify proposed accomplishments and outcomes in quantitative terms. While this has been standard language in the ConPlan rule, many state ConPlans have not indicated how many extremely low income households they intend to assist with affordable housing. Advocates need to monitor their state’s compliance with this long-standing ConPlan regulation as it affects not only the NHTF but other federal, state, and local resources.

(See separate article in this *Memo to Members* on NLIHC’s Model NHTF Allocation Plan.)

Notice CPD-16-07 is at <http://bit.ly/1TgNxjU>.

Prior to releasing Notice CPD-16-07, HUD conducted a webinar for state NHTF grantees. A recording of the webinar and accompanying slides are at <http://bit.ly/24pK4qZ>.

HUD’s list of state designated NHTF entities is at <http://bit.ly/1Govcho>.

## **NLIHC’s Model NHTF Allocation Plan and Developer Advisory Group**

NLIHC has produced a Model NHTF Allocation Plan for advocates to consider when engaging their state NHTF entity. NLIHC has also established an advisory group of affordable housing developers who have volunteered to help organizations applying for NHTF money understand how best to overcome the challenges of developing and operating rental housing affordable to extremely low income households.

NLIHC’s Model NHTF Allocation Plan can help advocates shape their state’s NHTF to address the most critical housing needs, ensure rents charged at NHTF homes are truly affordable to extremely low income households, and ensure rents are affordable for as long as possible (at least 30 years, as required by the interim rule, or longer). Advocates wanting to be more involved in influencing their state’s NHTF Allocation Plan can reach out to a lead advocate in their state, identified by NLIHC, who has volunteered to be an allocation plan point person.

The NHTF statute and the interim regulations implementing the statute list the elements that a state’s NHTF Allocation Plan must include. For instance, a state’s NHTF Allocation Plan must describe how the state will distribute its NHTF allocation based on the priority housing needs in the state’s Consolidated Plan. The Allocation Plan must describe the criteria that potential recipients of NHTF money must meet in order to receive NHTF resources. The statute also requires the Allocation Plan to give priority in awarding NHTF dollars to potential developers based on six factors specified in the statute.

Another NHTF resource recently created by NLIHC is an advisory group of nonprofit developers from around the county who have experience and expertise in developing and operating rental housing that extremely low income households can afford. The developers who have volunteered to be on this advisory group have agreed to help organizations understand how best to overcome the challenges of developing and operating rental housing affordable to extremely low-income households. They have agreed to answer questions from nonprofit developers, state housing coalition advocates, and state officials involved in NHTF planning and implementation.

NLIHC's Model NHTF Allocation Plan is at <http://bit.ly/1WqjT0J>.

NLIHC's NHTF point person in each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico is at [http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF\\_State\\_Advocates.pdf](http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/NHTF_State_Advocates.pdf)

The names and contact information of the NHTF Developer Advisory Group members is at <http://bit.ly/1Sj1uOp>.

In addition, NLIHC had made available a number of other NHTF resources, including a detailed Power Point at <http://bit.ly/1T7tKD9>, a five-part video series explaining the statutory and regulatory requirements at <http://bit.ly/1rCr377>, and 15 short pieces detailing specific NHTF components and issues at <http://bit.ly/1QD543U>.

## **Federal Budget**

### **Senate Consideration of THUD Spending Bill Delayed**

The Senate seemed poised to begin considering the FY17 THUD spending bill (S. 2844) last week until an amendment related to the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal was offered during debate of the FY17 Energy and Water spending bill, derailing the appropriations process.

Senators could not reach an agreement on the amendment introduced by Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR), and Democrats blocked closing debate on the spending bill twice before Senators left for a weeklong recess. As a result, the Senate will likely take up the THUD bill along with the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs (MilCon) spending bill when it returns on May 9.

Senator Susan Collins (R-ME), who chairs the THUD Appropriations Subcommittee, stated, "I am told we will go to my bill when we come back. [Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell] has told me to be prepared to go to THUD and that MilCon is going to be grafted onto the bill, or the two bills are going to be combined."

Senator Collins was still waiting to hear from her Senate colleagues about amendments they would like to offer to the THUD bill and asked that they contact her during the recess if they had proposals. Advocates are encouraged to contact their Senators during the recess and urge prompt passage of the THUD spending bill without controversial riders. (See *Memo*, [4/25](#) for a summary of the bill.)

In the House, THUD Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) indicated that the release of the Subcommittee's bill was still another few weeks away. He also stated, "We're not flush with money, but we'll be fine. I think we'll be able to put together a bill that people will feel proud of."

NLIHC's budget chart is at: <http://bit.ly/1SowzjU>

Read the text of the THUD spending bill at: <http://1.usa.gov/1NFsnj5>

Read the THUD spending bill's report at: <http://1.usa.gov/1VXtQ6G>

## **House Still Locked in Budget Battle, Senate Considers Reforms**

Republican members of the House Budget Committee continued to discuss ways to move forward its FY17 budget resolution but did not appear closer to gaining enough support to pass one on the House floor. Meanwhile, the Senate is considering ways to reform the budget process.

As previously reported (see *Memo*, [4/18](#)), the House is at a stalemate in advancing its proposed budget resolution that was approved by the Budget Committee in March on a party line vote. The budget resolution faces opposition on both sides of the aisle, with no apparent compromise in sight. Democrats want to maintain the topline \$1.07 trillion funding level agreed to in last year's budget deal, while conservative Republicans want cuts to both mandatory and discretionary spending.

The House is in recess this week and returns with only a few days before May 15, when the House Appropriations Committee is permitted to bring bills to the House floor without a budget resolution. House Appropriations Committee Chair Hal Rogers (R-KY) stated, "May 15 is the date that we can legally go to the floor without a budget resolution, so that's probably what'll happen."

The Senate continued to examine ways of reforming the budget process, with Senate Budget Committee Chair Mike Enzi (R-WY) declaring during a hearing, "I feel seriously enough about this that I have volunteered to eliminate the Budget Committee if it's irrelevant." He continued, "We can't need more steps in our process. We need more effective steps in our process." Congress has passed a budget resolution only seven times in the last 15 fiscal years. Senators on the committee are also considering moving towards biennial budgeting so agencies have more time to plan and increase certainty in the appropriations process.

Last week, the committee released a memo that outlines ways to reform the budget process, including making the congressional budget a binding document and conducting portfolio reviews to examine resource-allocation decisions (both tax preferences and spending) by policy goal.

Senator Enzi wants to produce a bipartisan overhaul bill this month, but it remains to be seen whether the full Senate will consider a bill this year.

Read the Senate Budget Committee memo at: <http://1.usa.gov/239p7Os>

## **Congress**

### **Bill Introduced to Remove Housing Barriers for People with Criminal Records**

Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA), Ranking Member of the House Financial Services Committee, introduced the "Fair Chance at Housing Act of 2016" (H.R. 5085) that would take significant steps towards ensuring people with criminal records have meaningful access to housing.

The bill would require public housing agencies (PHAs) and other owners of HUD- and USDA-assisted housing to provide applicants and current tenants with an individualized review that looks at the totality of their circumstances before making a decision based on criminal records. When screening or deciding whether to evict a tenant, housing providers would be limited in considering criminal activity that threatens the health, safety or right of peaceful enjoyment of others or violent activity that happens off the premises and poses future harm to others living in or working at the property.

The bill would also require housing providers to provide written notice of their screening policies and the reason why an applicant was denied housing. Currently, many housing providers do not post their policies in readily accessible locations, and some fail to disclose what specifically about a criminal record caused an applicant to be screened out.



Housing providers would be unable to deny admission to applicants based solely on certain situations, such as an eviction for past criminal activity or a juvenile adjudication or conviction, and they would be prohibited from conducting drug or alcohol testing of applicants or tenants without reason for suspicion. PHAs would no longer be able to rescreen families who are already receiving some form of housing assistance. The bill would allow HUD to provide increased administrative fees to those PHAs that serve people who have exited jails or prisons.

“The current harsh policies for housing assistance are a direct result of the harmful and ineffective legacies of the War on Drugs and the War on Crime,” Ms. Waters said. “Far too many Americans now carry a criminal record that limits their opportunities throughout life, despite the fact that they have successfully rehabilitated or taken great strides to change their lives. In particular, it has restricted access to housing assistance, which is a critical part of the rehabilitation and reentry process. The reforms in this bill will help ex-offenders get back on their feet, while ensuring that public housing authorities and owners maintain the authority to ensure the safety of other residents.”

Ms. Waters circulated a “dear colleague” letter asking her fellow representatives to support the bill. She wrote, “This bill is a smarter and safer approach to both fair housing and public safety. It would help reduce recidivism and prevent homelessness by helping ex-offenders find stable housing upon exiting a jail or prison, and by ensuring that individuals and households currently receiving federal housing assistance are not unfairly evicted.” So far, the bill has six cosponsors: Representatives Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Danny Davis (D-IL), Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ), Sanford Bishop (D-GA), Gwen Moore (D-WI), and Grace Napolitano (D-CA).

“We applaud Representative Waters for her bold actions in addressing the housing barriers faced by people with criminal records,” said NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel. “This bill will ensure that people who have served their time will have an opportunity to rejoin their families and communities and make the most of their second chance.”

Other groups that support the bill include the National Fair Housing Alliance, CSH, the National Housing Law Project, the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights, the National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund, the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force, the Arc of the United States, and the National Disability Rights Network.

Read Representative Waters’ press release at: <http://1.usa.gov/1YVWNhD>

Read Representative Waters’ dear colleague letter at: <http://bit.ly/1WWUyMm>

Read NLIHC’s blog about the bill at: <http://bit.ly/1YVWNxV>

Read NLIHC’s press release at: <http://www.nlihc.org/press/releases/6708>

### **Advocates Urge Senate Passage of Housing Modernization Act**

NLIHC joined 39 national organizations in sending a letter to the Senate urging passage of the “Housing Opportunities Through Modernization Act” (H.R. 3700). The House passed H.R. 3700 unanimously on February 2, 2016 (see *Memo*, [2/8](#)).

The letter states, “Our nation faces tremendous housing needs. This legislation is an important step forward to address a number of significant items that have enjoyed broad consensus over the years. There is more to be done to address housing and community development needs, but H.R. 3700 represents solid progress in the right direction. If enacted, this bipartisan bill would build on the effectiveness of federal rental assistance while achieving some modest savings.”

NLIHC and its partners urge advocates to meet with their Senators while Congress is in recess this week and ask that they pledge their support for passing H.R. 3700 by unanimous consent.

H.R. 3700 would make several important changes to the operation of housing assistance programs. It would:

- Improve the project-basing of vouchers to increase housing options while ensuring choice.
- Change income reviews to allow residents to hold onto 100% of increased earnings from income for longer periods.
- Impose housing assistance limits for households with incomes above 120% of the poverty level.
- Streamline income deductions while requiring hardship exemptions for negatively impacted families.
- Allow for expedited inspection processes for units to be rented with vouchers to quicken local efforts to house families and individuals.
- Update the Housing for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) distribution formula.

Read the letter at: <http://bit.ly/1YUjfri>

## **House Conservatives Release Poverty Agenda, Include Housing Reforms**

The Republican Study Committee (RSC), a group of conservatives in the House, submitted its recommendations to House Speaker Paul Ryan's (R-WI) Task Force on Poverty, Opportunity, and Upward Mobility that has been working to develop an anti-poverty agenda expected to be released in the coming months. The RSC's plan aims to "modernize America's social safety net and empower individuals through work." The plan includes recommendations for streamlining affordable housing programs and imposing work requirements.

Specifically, the plan proposes linking housing assistance with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and other welfare initiatives "to make it easier for beneficiaries to receive assistance and work." Able-bodied people with no dependents would be required to work or be preparing to work in order to receive housing assistance.

The plan recommends Congress make reforms that would allow housing voucher recipients to move more easily to high opportunity neighborhoods. "Benefits should travel with qualified beneficiaries, and not trap families in failing areas with limited economic opportunity by being tied to a particular housing unit," the report states. The plan recommends that a portion of housing assistance be allocated to programs that assist recovering drug and alcohol abusers.

The plan also states that the federal government should push for more private investment in public housing through an expansion of the Rental Assistance Demonstration, and housing authorities should be permitted to use profits to develop units without government assistance. Housing authorities should consolidate and be required to compete for funding based on their ability to get people to join the workforce.

The plan states, "It is unclear whether the federal government should play a central role in subsidizing housing, but if these programs are to exist, then they should focus on moving the poor away from dependence on federal subsidies. Under their current form, these programs encourage broken homes, broken communities, and low self-worth among recipients."

The plan would also combine funding streams of safety net programs into a single stream for each state that would be based on a historical average of funding across a business cycle. States would have flexibility in how they use and save money from their funding stream, but they would be penalized if they fail to impose work requirements.

Read the Republican Study Committee's proposal at: <http://1.usa.gov/1VUCIzy>

## **NAEH and Congressional Homelessness Caucus Host Hill Briefing**

On April 28, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) and the Congressional Homelessness Caucus hosted a Hill briefing to highlight NAEH's recently released *The State of Homelessness in America 2016* report (see *Memo 4/18*), as well as the work of homeless service providers making progress on ending veteran and chronic homelessness. The briefing featured a panel of speakers, including Samantha Batko, director of the Homelessness Research Institute of NAEH; Steve Berg, vice president for Programs and Policy at NAEH; Kelly King-Horne, executive director of Homeward; and Lisa Tepper-Bates, executive director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness.

Representative Alcee Hastings (D-FL), co-chair of the Congressional Homelessness Caucus, opened the briefing with remarks on the importance of addressing homelessness and an update on the appropriations process. Following introductions by Mr. Berg, Ms. Batko presented an overview of the findings from *The State of Homelessness in America 2016*. Ms. Batko focused on the progress being made to end chronic and veteran homelessness, as well as the continued need for homelessness assistance. Ms. Tepper-Bates and Ms. King-Horne shared their local perspectives on the importance of using data to coordinate efficiently homeless service systems and to maximize the impact of federal resources. Both speakers highlighted the efficacy of federal funding for homeless services.

Mr. Berg concluded the panel discussion by stressing the need for federal funding to continue making progress on ending homelessness, while acknowledging the urgent need to solve the larger issue of affordable housing. Said Mr. Berg, "It's not that often that you can get this close to solving a social problem."

The briefing was well-attended by Congressional staffers.

*The State of Homelessness in America 2016* is available at <http://bit.ly/1qJMXo1>.

## **HUD**

### **PHAs Award Grants to Help Justice-Involved Youth Find Housing and Jobs**

In an effort to reduce housing and employment barriers for justice-involved youth, HUD and the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced \$1.75 million in grants to public housing agencies (PHAs) that have partnered with nonprofit legal service organizations to help young people address the collateral consequences associated with their juvenile or criminal record. There are currently nearly 55,000 people under 21 years old confined in juvenile justice facilities, and about 185,000 people between the ages of 18 and 24 are incarcerated in state and federal prisons.

Under the Juvenile Reentry Assistance Program (JRAP), young people under the age of 25 who reside in public housing or could reside in public housing but for their record, will receive assistance to expunge, seal or correct their criminal records so that they have better access to housing and jobs. The program will also provide counseling on young people's legal rights when searching for employment and guidance on how they can return to school. HUD and DOJ awarded grants to eighteen PHAs, including the New York City Housing Authority, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, and the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

HUD Secretary Julián Castro and U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch announced the grant awards in a news conference held during National Reentry Week, April 24-30. "Reconnecting young people who've paid their debt to society to decent jobs and housing allows them to turn the page and become active, productive members of their communities," said Secretary Castro. "These grants offer a helping hand to those who deserve a second chance so they have a real opportunity to reach their full potential."

"The future of our nation depends upon the future of our young people - including young people who have become involved with our justice system," said Attorney General Lynch. "By helping justice-involved youth find decent jobs and stable housing after they return home, these critical grants provide a foundation for a fresh start and offer a path towards productivity and purpose. In the months ahead, the Department of Justice will continue helping justice-involved youth enrich their lives and improve our country."

Read the HUD press release, which includes all the PHAs who have been awarded grants, at: <http://1.usa.gov/1SIcXXZ>

Read summaries of each PHA's JRAP program at: <http://1.usa.gov/24if3c0>

## **Housing in the Elections**

### **Advocates Thank Candidates for Visiting Public Housing, Request Follow up Meetings**

After both Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Secretary Hillary Clinton visited New York public housing and detailed the affordable housing policies they would pursue as President, advocates sent letters thanking the candidates for responding to their request to do so. NLIHC had joined New York City Council members Ritchie Torres, Jumaane Williams, and Brad Lander in urging presidential candidates to visit New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing properties in the lead up to New York's primary elections on April 19 (see *Memo*, [4/18](#)). Other signatories to the letter included Community Service Society, Community Voices Heard (SVH), Power Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) and the Legal Aid Society.

The follow-up letters state, "On behalf of our coalition of public housing resident leaders, advocates, community-based organizations and elected officials, we write to sincerely thank you for answering our call to tour a New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing development as a part of your campaign in New York's Presidential primary, and to strengthen your commitment to address pressing issues of affordable and public housing facing low-income families across the United States." The letters thank each candidate for their affordable housing proposals, specifically expressing gratitude for each candidate's "newly articulated commitment to fight for increased funding for public housing," and requests follow up meetings with the candidates' staff "to discuss the inclusion of affordable housing issues in the 2016 Democratic Party Platform to be adopted at the Democratic National Convention this summer."

Advocates also wrote to the Republican presidential candidates, expressing disappointment that none responded to the request to visit public housing developments or to announce their plans to end the affordable housing crisis. Advocates also requested meetings with the Republican candidates' staff to discuss the inclusion of affordable housing issues in the Republican Party Platform.

### **NLIHC Reprises Voterization Webinars**

For those who might have missed NLIHC's first two webinar offerings of the 2016 Voterization series, not to worry. Due to popular demand, both sessions will be presented again in early May. "Understanding and Overcoming the Challenges of Voter Registration," will be presented on Wednesday, May 4, at 2:00pm ET and "Educating Voters and Engaging Candidates on Housing Issues," will be presented on Tuesday, May 10, at 1:00pm ET.

NLIHC's voter registration webinar will provide an overview of the Voterization project and provide tips and best practices for voter registration drives. The webinar will also cover important legal considerations for 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to consider when conducting voter engagement activities.

The webinar on voter education and candidate engagement will provide detailed information on creating voter guides, participating in candidate forums, and getting candidates to take positions on issues through candidate questionnaires.

Throughout the 2016 election season, NLIHC will offer webinars and resources to train advocates and service providers on how to carry out non-partisan voter engagement efforts with low income residents and their allies. Strong low-income resident participation in the 2016 elections is essential to get candidates to address the issue of affordable rental housing in their campaigns.

Both webinars will provide closed captioning.

Register for "Understanding and Overcoming the Challenges of Voter Registration," at: <http://bit.ly/1YWp6fl>  
Register for "Educating Voters and Engaging Candidates on Housing Issues," at: <http://bit.ly/1pOMhgd>

## Research

### Federal Housing Assistance Declines Despite Increase in Need

A publication by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities titled *Chart Book: Cuts in Federal Assistance Have Exacerbated Families' Struggles to Afford Housing* illustrates the budget cuts to federal affordable housing programs over the past six years. Adjusted for inflation, discretionary spending on federal housing assistance in 2016 was \$2.1 billion, 4.6% less than in 2010. The number of households who are severely cost-burdened, living in severely substandard housing, and experiencing housing instability has risen over the same period.

Public housing and the HOME Investment Partnership Program have seen the largest cuts, with \$1.6 billion and \$1.0 billion less than in 2010. Some programs have seen increases in funding: homeless assistance (\$213 million), rural rental assistance (\$311 million) and Section 8 Project Based Rental Assistance (\$1.2 billion).

The number of families served by the Housing Choice Voucher program declined by almost 100,000 from December 2012 to June 2014. Restored funding has improved the situation, but by December 2015 there were approximately 45,000 fewer families served by vouchers than in December 2012. Funding for the Housing Choice Voucher program is \$228 million lower in 2016 than in 2010.

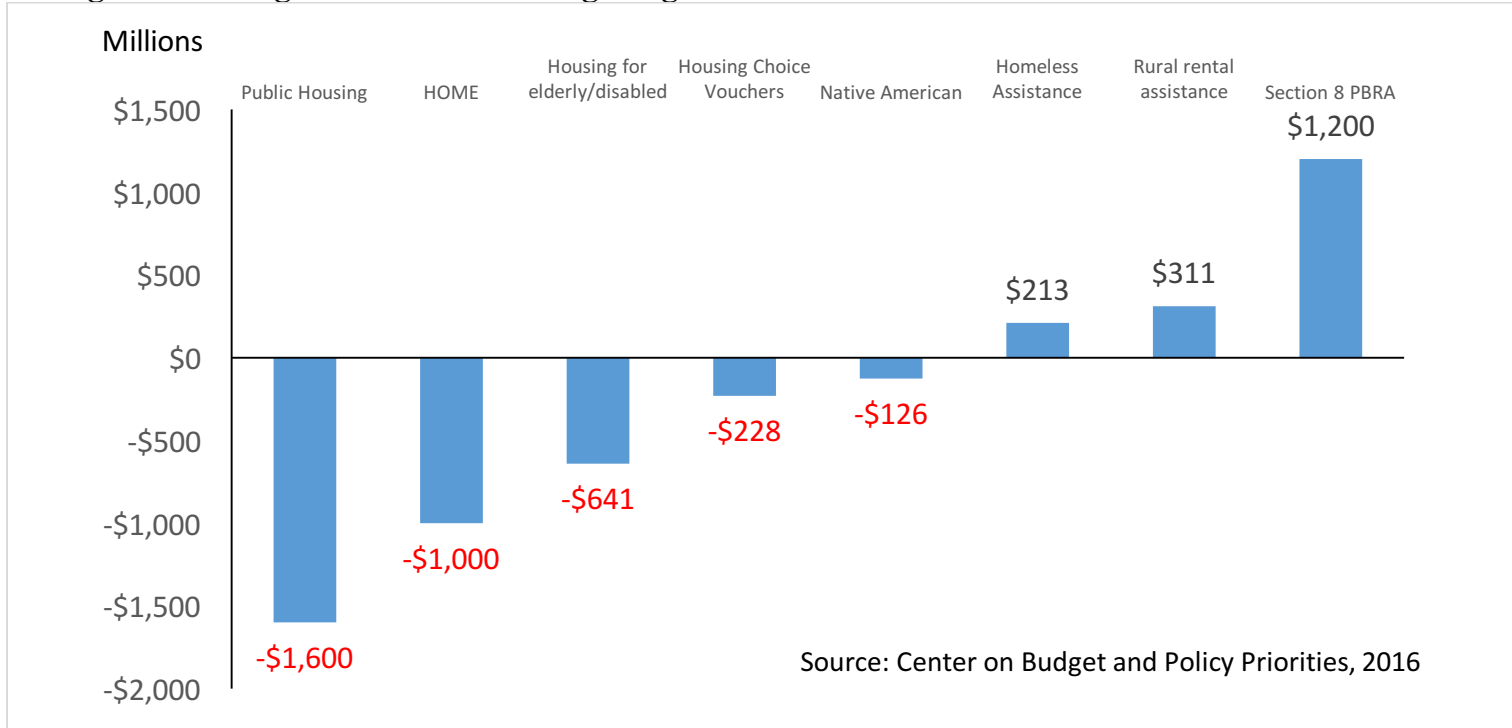
Funding has been inadequate for preserving and repairing public housing units. HUD estimated in 2010 that the repairs and renovation needed in the public housing stock would cost approximately \$26 billion. The need has virtually certainly increased since then as funds for capital repairs have been cut by 53% over the last 16 years. Capital funding for repairs and renovation was \$1.9 billion in 2016.

These cuts have come at a time when incomes have not kept up with housing costs. The number of very low income (VLI) renter households with incomes no greater than 50% of their area median income who spent more than half of their income on housing or who lived in severely substandard housing increased from 5.0 million in 2001 to 7.7 million in 2013. Families with children have seen the largest increase. The gap between the incomes of low-income renter households and housing costs have also resulted in a record number of school-age children – 1.36 million – who lacked a home of their own during the 2013-2014 school year and who lived doubled up with another family (1.0 million), in shelters (0.2 million), in hotels/motels (82,000), or on the street (45,000).

*Chart Book: Cuts in Federal Assistance Have Exacerbated Families' Struggles to Afford Housing* is available at: <http://bit.ly/1VqPbph>.

## Fact of the Week

### Change in Funding for Federal Housing Programs since 2010



Source: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2016). *Chart Book: Cuts in Federal Assistance Have Exacerbated Families' Struggle to Afford Housing*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1VqPbph>.

## From the Field

### Washington State Budget Takes Small Steps on Homelessness, Much More Needed

Washington affordable housing advocates are encouraged by commitments to address youth homelessness in the supplemental capital and operating budgets passed by the state legislature before adjournment on March 30. These investments, however, fall far short of what advocates were hoping to see state leaders include in the final budget. The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (Housing Alliance), an NLIHC state coalition partner, is already focusing on next year's budget battle by developing advocacy skills throughout their network with a Board Advocacy Project, an Emerging Advocates Program, and an advocacy capacity-building track at their upcoming annual conference.

As homelessness continues to increase rapidly throughout Washington, both King County and the City of Seattle have declared states of emergency on homelessness (see *Memo*, [11/9/15](#)), while the City of Vancouver has declared an affordable housing state of emergency. With intense pressure on communities to find new resources for housing, advocates expected more investments in the state budget. The final budget bill constitutes a compromise between the Democrat-controlled House and the Republican-controlled Senate. The Housing Alliance was very supportive of the original House budget and an alternative proposal in the Senate that would have tapped the state's Rainy Day Fund to address homelessness.

The positives in the final state budget primarily address youth homelessness: \$2 million is included to fund the "Homeless Student Stability Act," H.B. 1682. This \$2 million will fund liaison positions in schools that do not have sufficient federal funding through the McKinney-Vento programs. H.B. 1682 aims to reduce the caseloads

of liaison officers so that they can provide more meaningful interventions for students whose families are in housing crisis. In addition to increasing staff support, H.B. 1682 creates a grant program for up to 15 school districts to provide rent vouchers, rapid rehousing services, or other forms of direct assistance.

The budget bill allocates \$1.028 million for “HOPE Beds” for homeless youth. HOPE Beds provide immediate emergency shelter to adolescents who are living on the streets. The budget also provides \$800,000 for Street Youth Services to provide caseworkers who will operate at the street level to engage with homeless youth and make them aware of resources they might access for safe housing and supportive services. The funding provided for all three programs to address youth homelessness is mostly a re-appropriation of other state funds and does not represent a commitment of new resources.

Efforts to end discrimination against tenants using subsidies like Housing Choice Vouchers were not successful, but the final capital budget did provide funding for an incentive program to encourage landlords to rent to tenants using subsidies. The program is modeled after a similar, successful initiative in Oregon in which the state compensates landlords renting homes to voucher holders for damages to apartments beyond what would be considered normal wear and tear. The program is intended to assuage the generally baseless fears of landlords that tenants who use housing subsidies are more likely to cause costly property damage.

The Housing Alliance had strongly supported the House-approved budget bill that included \$37.5 million for affordable housing and supportive services and the “Bring Washington Home Act,” which would have generated \$300 million for affordable housing and homelessness services. According to the Housing Alliance, these bills were never given serious consideration in the Senate beyond a perfunctory hearing.

Beyond the budget battle, the Housing Alliance was successful in securing a victory for tenants searching for new housing. Governor Jay Inslee signed the “Fair Tenant Screening and Eviction Reporting Act,” S.B. 6413, on March 29. The new law creates a tool to ensure that tenant screening reports do not include records of eviction cases that were decided in a tenant’s favor or were dismissed. Previously, tenants commonly lost out on rental homes based on eviction proceedings that did not result in eviction actions. The new law also furthers statewide fair tenant screening practices by requiring landlords to disclose whether they will accept reusable tenant screening reports that are purchased by tenants through a consumer reporting agency. Landlords often charge tenant screening fees, so the portable reports can save tenants hundreds of dollars when conducting housing searches. S.B. 6413 passed with overwhelming bi-partisan support in both chambers of the legislature. This rare consensus among lawmakers was due to a compromise struck by Senator Mark Mullet (D), who included a provision in his bill that gave landlords an additional seven days to postmark security deposit returns. The legal standard is now 21 days, up from fourteen.

To achieve better results in the next legislative session, the Housing Alliance continues to cultivate new leaders with the skills they need to advocate for better state budget. Their Emerging Advocates Program teaches individuals effective storytelling, voter engagement, using data, and promoting issues through social media. The Housing Alliance also works with their member organizations to engage their respective Boards of Directors to participate more directly in advocacy. The Board Advocacy Project engages board members who often have little experience in legislative advocacy and gives them the tools to participate in policy discussions on homelessness and housing. The Board Advocacy Project is one of many similar efforts nationwide that are supported by the Stand for Your Mission campaign, which provides tools and resources for nonprofit organizations working to expand advocacy skills of board members.

“Addressing homelessness and our state’s affordable housing crisis with expanded state commitment has never been more urgent, and we need bold action from leaders at the state level,” said Housing Alliance Executive Director Rachael Myers. “We are committed to seeing that more advocates participate next year, and these issues are at the forefront of the debate in state elections.”

For more information about housing advocacy efforts in Washington, contact Rachael Myers at [rachael@wliha.org](mailto:rachael@wliha.org).

To read more about the Emerging Advocates Program, go to: <http://wliha.org/EAP>

To read more about the Board Advocacy Project, go to: <http://bit.ly/1MNtnS6>

To read more about the Stand for Your Mission campaign, go to: <http://standforyourmission.org/>

## Resources

### Short Video Explains Fair Housing Disparate Impact

The Oregon Law Center has produced a two-and-a-half-minute video introducing the concept of fair housing disparate impact for a general audience. Although written to inform Oregon landlords and public housing agencies, the video would be useful to advocates nationally.

The video, funded through a grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust, provides examples of landlord policies that might have a disparate impact, refers to the Supreme Court decision upholding the disparate impact theory (see *Memo*, [6/29/15](#)), and explains the three-pronged test that U.S. Courts of Appeals have used over the years and that was written into HUD's disparate impact rule (see *Memo*, [2/8/13](#)).

Note: Early in the video the narrator states that it is against the law for a landlord to reject someone who gets rental assistance; this "source of income" protection is not available in many states and localities.

The video is at: <http://bit.ly/1YVGr8B>

More information about disparate impact is on page 7-1 of NLIHC's *2016 Advocates' Guide*, <http://bit.ly/23ihgne>

## Events

### Matthew Desmond Addresses Evictions in U.S.

Harvard sociologist and MacArthur Genius Dr. Matthew Desmond discussed his critically acclaimed work, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, to an audience of housing advocates and others committed to ending housing poverty at an event hosted by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Coalition on Human Needs, and the National Housing Conference on April 29, 2016. More than 160 individuals attended the event in person and over 200 participated by live stream. Dr. Desmond participated in a live Twitter chat immediately following the event, responding to questions and comments from around the country. The chat trended at the number 8 spot on Twitter worldwide.

Published in March of 2016, *Evicted* was an immediate bestseller and has catapulted the rental housing crisis and the reality of housing poverty into the national spotlight.

To read more about Dr. Desmond's talk on NLIHC's On the Home Front Blog, go to: <https://hfront.org/>.

To view a recording of the event, go to: <http://bit.ly/1TAyy7e>



## **Consortium for Housing and Asset Management Annual Conference, June 27-29**

Thought-leaders from across the affordable housing movement will explore the challenge of keeping affordable housing sustainable at the Consortium for Housing and Asset Management (CHAM) annual conference in Columbus, Ohio, June 27-29. Presenters and participants will discuss emerging topics and trends within the asset management discipline, focusing on creative and effective strategies to “mind the gap” between income and expenses to ensure long-term sustainability of affordable housing. The keynote speaker will be David Smith, Chairman of Recap Advisors. The event is hosted by NeighborWorks America, Enterprise Community Partners, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and co-sponsored by Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing.

Register for the CHAM conference at: <http://www.cham.us/>

## **NLIHC News**

### **NLIHC Seeking Director of Public Policy**

NLIHC is seeking a director of public policy to advance the Coalition’s policy-related programs and projects. The director will facilitate the Coalition’s public policy-setting process, assuring robust engagement of Coalition members, with particular emphasis on the participation of low income people. The director will work closely with members of the Administration and Congress to advance the Coalition’s priorities to assure people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes.

Among the director of public policy’s duties and responsibilities:

**Policy Development, Analysis, Monitoring, and Influencing:** Serving as the point person for selected policy projects and agenda items; tracking, analyzing, influencing, and reporting on them; and advocating Coalition positions to Members of Congress and the Administration through letters, visits, phone calls, and e-mails. Developing and maintaining relationships with legislative and executive branch offices and with other organizations and coalitions; coordinating member lobbying visits and planning and implementing Hill briefings. Staffing the Coalition’s policy advisory committee and assuring the committee’s timely consideration of and input into emerging policy issues. Identifying the need for field alerts and calls to action (CTAs) on policy issues and collaborating with the Communications and Field teams on alerts and CTAs’ content and outreach. Ensuring that the Coalition’s housing research work is integrated into policy development, monitoring, and influencing.

**Member Communication and Education:** Preparing materials that translate proposals and actions into an understandable format for members and state coalition partners, including through our weekly newsletter *Memo to Members*, and responding to information requests. Working with communications and field teams to assist in developing content for the NLIHC resident newsletter and/or online resident forum; writing, reviewing and ensuring accuracy of policy-related articles in the annual *Advocates’ Guide*; and assuring timely, accessible, accurate, and engaging presentation of all policy content on the Coalition’s website. Planning and implementing webinars and other informational outreach on the Coalition’s policy agenda items. Representing the Coalition on boards, committees, task forces and work groups, and with media. Engaging in public speaking on NLIHC priorities at meetings and conferences. Coordinating and moderating policy-related sessions at NLIHC’s annual policy forum.

**Management and Administration:** Supervising and coordinating the work of policy analyst(s) and policy intern. Assisting in policy-related portions of fund development.

Qualifications required for the position include proven outstanding written and verbal communication and policy analysis skills; expertise in federal housing policy, programs and finance; 5-10 years of direct experience

with the legislative process at the federal or state level; and a proven commitment to housing and social justice. A Master's degree or JD is required.

An equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, NLIHC offers a competitive salary and benefits package. The position is based in Washington, DC.

Interested candidates should forward a cover letter, salary requirements, resume, and two writing samples to Paul Kealey, Chief Operating Officer, NLIHC, 1000 Vermont Ave., NW, Suite 500, Washington DC 20005 at [pkealey@nlihc.org](mailto:pkealey@nlihc.org).

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Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, x314  
Sarah Jemison, Housing Advocacy Organizer, x244  
Paul Kealey, Chief Operating Officer, x232  
Gar Meng Leong, Research Intern, x241  
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Khara Norris, Director of Administration, x242  
Ikra Rafi, Graphic Design Intern, x250  
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Christina Sin, Development Coordinator, x234  
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