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Point of View

Become an NLIHC Member Today

Like many of you, my home is the center of my family. It's where my husband and I are raising our two boys – where we play and study, read books and sing songs, where we sit around the dinner table every evening sharing stories from our day. Home is where I sing lullabies to help my sons fall asleep, where we all rest and renew. Our safe, affordable home is our sanctuary – it's what makes all of our efforts and achievements outside of home possible.

Too many of the poorest families in our country don't have that same safety and security. At NLIHC, we work hard every day to ensure that every family and every person has an opportunity to live in decent, safe and affordable homes. We advocate to protect and expand critical affordable housing programs that serve the lowest income people like the National Housing Trust Fund, Section 8 vouchers and public housing. And with a shortage of over seven million homes affordable and available for the lowest income people, we have our work cut out for us.

Our work wouldn't be possible without our members. Our members are our strength in numbers, and provide important financial support. September is membership month at the NLIHC, so there's no better time to join us in our efforts. Please join the National Low Income Housing Coalition today. If you're already a member – thank you for your support and dedication. Please help us increase our members by urging your friends, family and colleagues to also join!

Every person and every dollar of support makes a difference, so please join us:

<http://nlihc.org/membership/nmm>

Together we can end homelessness and housing poverty, once and for all.

Thanks,
Diane

National Housing Trust Fund

HUD Approves Hawaii and Vermont HTF Allocation Plans

At a September 1 public roundtable discussion in Burlington, VT, hosted by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), HUD Secretary Julián Castro announced that Vermont was the second state to have its national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) Allocation Plan approved by HUD. Vermont holds a special place in the HTF's history because Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) introduced the first legislation to create a national NTF in 2001 when he was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Subsequent to the Vermont announcement, NLIHC learned from HUD that Hawaii was the first state to secure approval of its HTF Allocation Plan.

HTF Allocation Plans from all other states and the District of Columbia, which were due on August 16, are in various stages of HUD review.

Vermont's approved HTF Allocation Plan is at: <http://bit.ly/2cEZ5RF>.

Hawaii's approved HTF Allocation Plan is not yet publicly available.

NLIHC's HTF website has links to each state's draft HTF Allocation Plan and other related material at:

<http://bit.ly/28SEBVd>

Administration

OMB Director Donovan Urges Evidence-Based Policymaking

The Bipartisan Policy Center hosted a panel discussion on August 8 titled “Follow the Evidence: The Promise and Potential for a Different Approach to Policymaking.” The event, featuring Office of Management and Budget Director Shaun Donovan, focused on the importance of evidence-based policymaking. Mr. Donovan and other panelists discussed innovative paths to effective governance and using data analysis and rigorous research to evaluate effective programs, implement reforms, and make critical budget decisions.

Mr. Donovan kicked off the event by explaining the dangers of partisanship in Congress. He stated that ideological differences, lack of transparency, and approval ratings lower than 20% have hampered policymakers in recent years. Mr. Donovan said that evidence-based policymaking would lead to efficient and fact-based legislation to improve program effectiveness, while holding Congress accountable for government transparency. He and other panelists praised House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI), Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), and the Obama administration for their work in support of such efforts to create a more effective legislative branch.

Speaker Ryan’s and House Republicans’ recently released anti-poverty agenda includes recommendations for funding federal programs based on evidence. While the agenda did not include specific legislative proposals, its recommendations may be incorporated into future bills that could impact the way housing and community development programs are funded.

Discussing his experience as former HUD Secretary, Mr. Donovan explained that an evaluation of Housing Choice Voucher data led to identifying a local model that more effectively implemented the program. This insight allowed HUD to identify failing models and apply lessons learned. Mr. Donovan stated that this experience demonstrated the effectiveness of evaluating data to identify and implement best practices nationwide.

Ron Haskins of the Commission on Evidence Based Policy stated that the goal of evidence-based policymaking is to design a rigorous evaluation program that ultimately steers public resources to the most effective and relevant programs. Like Mr. Donovan, Mr. Haskins emphasized the importance of fixing underperforming programs rather than cutting them to achieve deficit reduction.

All the panelists stressed the significance of bipartisan support for reevaluating federally funded programs. They also agreed that the goal of efficiency in public spending has the ability to bridge ideological differences and to garner bipartisan support for evidence-based policymaking in the future.

Read BPC’s issue brief at: <http://bit.ly/2cpqB92>

Budget

Congress Debates Stopgap Funding to Avoid Government Shutdown

Congress remains at an impasse over how to fund the federal government for the new fiscal year that begins on October 1, creating the possibility of a government shutdown. Congress has failed to enact any of the 12 federal spending bills for FY17, including those that fund affordable housing and community development.

Congress now has less than four weeks before the October 1 deadline to pass a stopgap funding measure, known as a Continuing Resolution (CR), to fund the federal government and avert a shutdown. A CR carries forward funding levels from the previous year. The question at hand is how long any CR will last—and what impact it will have on Congress’s ability to enact final FY17 spending bills.

Some members of Congress are pushing for a short-term CR to fund the government through the November elections so that Congress can enact final spending bills by the end of the year, likely in the form of a large package, known as an omnibus, or smaller packages called “minibuses.” The Republican House and Senate leadership, along with Democrats and congressional appropriators, have indicated they would prefer a short-term CR to avoid saddling the next administration with major funding decisions right after a new president takes office. They are also hesitant to fund federal agencies and programs based on last year’s levels for an extended period.

Conservative members of the Republican caucus prefer a longer term CR, urging their leadership to enact one that runs until March to push off any decisions about spending to the next Congress and Administration. They argue that lame-duck negotiations lead to higher spending levels. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has already indicated that Senate Democrats would block a long-term CR from moving forward. Some conservative Members of the House have said they may be willing to go along with a short-term CR, but only if it includes certain controversial policy riders that would likely derail the CR from advancing.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) announced that he began discussions with the White House and Minority Leader Reid about moving a short-term CR as early as this week. Mr. McConnell suggested that the CR would run through December 9 to give lawmakers enough time to negotiate and pass an omnibus spending package.

A CR that extends into next year would be problematic for housing and community development programs. First, a long-term CR at FY16 levels would result in deep cuts to critical housing programs that could cause thousands of families and children to lose access to stable housing, putting them at increased risk of homelessness. For FY17, HUD needs approximately \$1 billion more than FY16 spending levels and USDA needs \$18 million more to maintain current program levels and renew existing housing assistance contracts. This increase will help to keep all families using tenant and project-based rental assistance in their homes, including veterans who have recently received HUD Veterans Affairs Supporting Housing (VASH) vouchers.

Second, a long-term CR would put other vital affordable housing investments at risk. Both the House and Senate proposed bills for HUD would increase resources for affordable housing programs—\$1.2 billion and \$1.5 billion, respectively—to help provide affordable, stable housing for more seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and people experiencing homelessness. Both bills propose needed increases for Housing Choice Vouchers, Project Based Rental Assistance, Section 202 Housing for the Elderly, Homeless Assistance Grants, and Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction. In addition, the House and Senate bills provide level funding or modest increases for the Public Housing Operating Fund, Public Housing Capital Fund, Family Self Sufficiency Program, HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) program, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program.

In summary, a long-term CR would intensify the nation’s affordable housing crisis. There is a current shortage of more than 7.2 million units of housing that are affordable and available to the nation’s 10.4 million extremely low income households, those with incomes at or below 30% of area median incomes. Seventy-five percent of these households are severely housing cost-burdened, spending more than half of their incomes on their housing.

To address the affordability crisis and build on recent progress in decreasing homelessness in the U.S., Congress should pass appropriations bills for HUD and USDA programs that will increase the number of families who are able to afford modest homes. A long-term CR would make it more difficult for America’s most vulnerable families to access safe, decent, and affordable housing.

It is important that advocates weigh in now with lawmakers and ask that they oppose a long-term CR and work towards passing full-year FY17 spending bills, free of policy riders, as soon as possible.

Criminal Justice

Webinar on How Homeless Service Providers Can Serve Reentry Population

The National Alliance to End Homelessness will host a webinar titled “Reentry Services 101: What Homeless Service Providers Need to Know” on Wednesday, September 14, 2-3:30 pm ET.

People returning to the community from jail or prison, or those who have criminal records, often face numerous barriers to securing safe, stable, affordable housing. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn how homeless service providers can develop more effective partnerships with the criminal justice system and better serve people who are experiencing homelessness or those at risk of homelessness.

Speakers for the webinar include:

- Mary Owens, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Madeline Neighly, CSG Justice Center
- Alix McLearn, PhD, Female Offender Branch, Federal Bureau of Prisons
- Marcus Dawal, Adult Field Services Alameda County Probation Department
- Wendy Jackson, Oakland Community Project (EOCP)

Register for the webinar at: <http://bit.ly/2c5YzQF>

Criminal Justice Reform on Verge of Receiving House Vote

The House Judiciary Committee voted to approve several criminal justice reform bills earlier this year. Despite bipartisan support for the bills, House leadership did not include criminal justice reform on its agenda for September. But this past week Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-WI) opened the door for a possible vote on some or all of the bills if he hears from enough Members of Congress.

While it is unclear whether these bills will become law, a House vote would serve as an important first step towards comprehensive criminal justice reform. NLIHC and others are working to ensure that any comprehensive legislation addresses the significant housing needs of formerly incarcerated people.

The U.S. incarcerates its citizens at a shockingly high rate, and nearly one in three Americans has a criminal record. Current laws disproportionately impact people of color and people living in poverty.

As more formerly incarcerated individuals return to their communities, there is growing concern about how they will fare upon reentry. Resources, especially for affordable housing, are already scarce in the low-income communities where formerly incarcerated persons typically return. Because of their criminal records, justice-involved individuals face additional barriers in accessing affordable housing, putting them at risk of homelessness and subsequent recidivism.

Contact your Representatives today and urge them to push for a vote on criminal justice reform.

NLIHC’s action alert is at: <http://bit.ly/2cKi9AP>

Research

California Tax Expenditures Disproportionately Benefit Higher Income Homeowners

A study by the California Budget & Policy Center titled *Spending through California’s Tax Code* finds that the state’s tax expenditures disproportionately benefit higher income homeowners. The tax benefit from the

mortgage interest deduction on state tax returns is 36 times greater than the benefit from the state's tax credit for renters. The mortgage interest deduction is 19 times greater than the combined tax benefits of the state's renters' credit, student loan interest deduction, and child and dependent care credit.

California's mortgage interest deduction from taxable income is the state's largest tax expenditure. Of the \$3.8 billion tax benefit provided by the deduction, more than 74% goes to households with incomes over \$100,000. Targeted tax expenditures for households with lower incomes are relatively small. The student loan interest deduction provided tax benefits of \$54.8 million to California taxpayers in 2012, 72% of which went to households with incomes between \$20,000 and \$100,000; the state's child and dependent care credit provided benefits of \$34.3 million, 89% of which went to households with income between \$50,000 and \$100,000; and a renters' tax credit provided \$105.8 million of benefits to renters below a particular income.

The degree to which tax benefits received by higher income homeowners outstrip the tax benefits received by lower income households results in a markedly regressive state income tax. California's lowest-income families spend an average of 10.5% of their income on state and local taxes. Families in the top of 1% of income spend 8.7%. The study recommends that California set expiration dates and require periodic reviews for tax expenditures because they rarely come up for public debate. The report also recommends targeting the benefits of the state's tax expenditures to low and middle-income households.

NLIHC's United for Homes campaign proposes mortgage interest deduction reform at the federal level. United for Homes proposes converting the mortgage interest deduction to a tax credit that would assist lower income homeowners and lowering the portion of a mortgage eligible for a tax benefit from \$1 million to \$500,000. The reform would save more than \$200 billion over 10 years that could be invested to meet the housing needs of the lowest income households.

Spending through California's Tax Code is available at: <http://bit.ly/2cbcFzU>

U.S. Ranks Poorly in Housing Affordability among Advanced Countries

A paper by the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University titled *Rental Housing: An International Comparison* finds that of 12 advanced countries the United States has the greatest share of renters (28.5%) who are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on their housing. The second highest share is found in Spain (27.5%). The United States fares even worse in a comparison of severe cost burdens among the lowest income renters. Sixty-nine percent of the poorest 20% of renters in the United States are severely cost burdened. The median poor renter household in the U.S. spends 74.8% of its income on rent.

The authors utilized data primarily from the American Housing Survey (AHS) for the U.S., the National Household Survey (NHS) for Canada, and the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) for European countries to examine renters and the rental housing stock. The analysis also examined housing assistance in each country.

The median renter household spends 32.3% of its income on housing in Spain, 31.1% in the U.S., 30.1% in the United Kingdom, 26.2% in Canada, 22.2% in Germany, 19.3% in Switzerland, and 19.0% in Austria. Among the poorest renters, the U.S. fares the worst. Among renters with the lowest incomes (bottom 20% of incomes), the median renter household spends 74.8% of its income on housing in the United States, 67.6% in Spain, 54.9% in Italy, and just 34.5% in Switzerland, 32.8% in the Netherlands, and 31.1% in France.

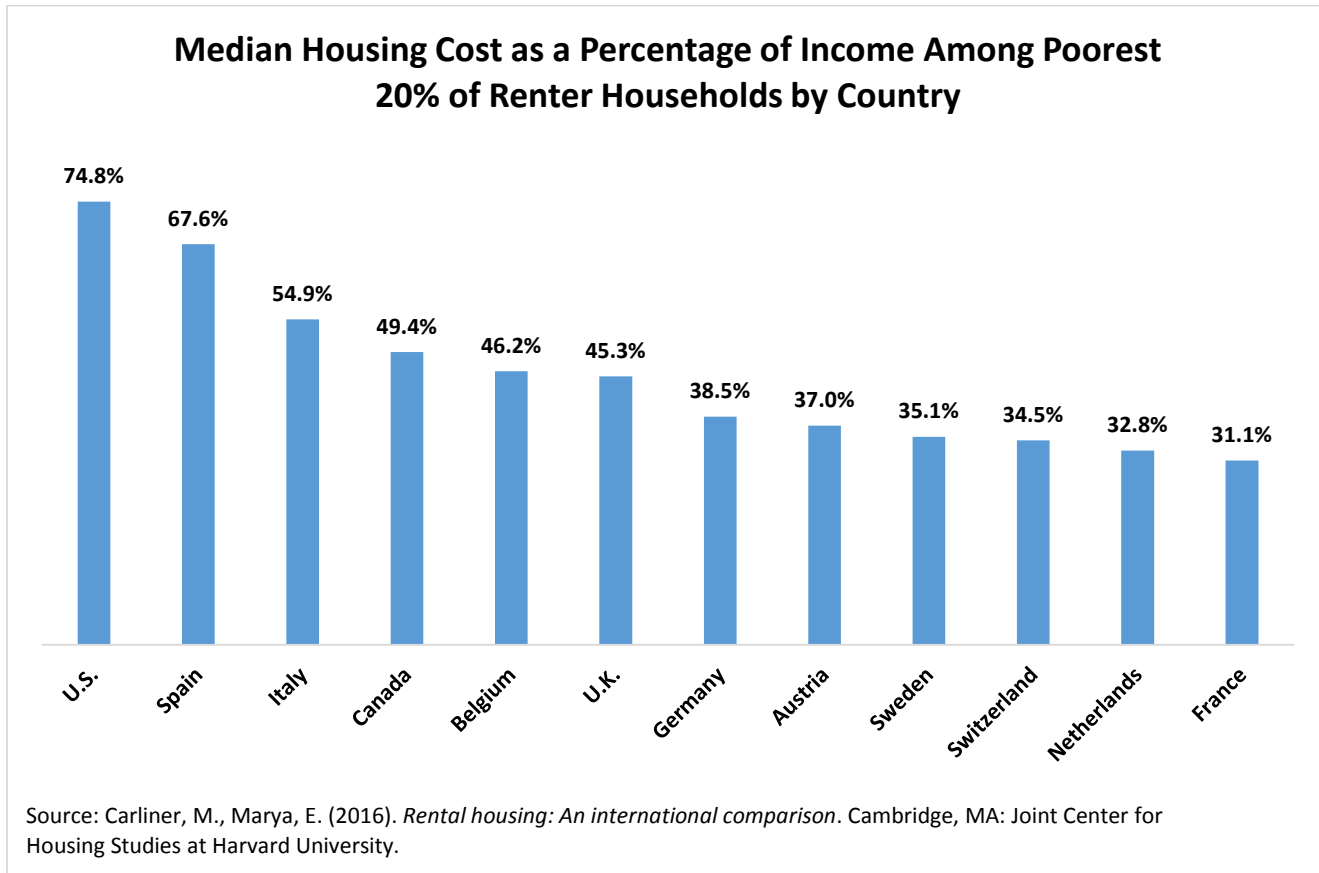
These international differences in affordability appear to be driven by the availability of housing assistance, income inequality, and the level of housing consumption in each country. Housing Choice Vouchers in the U.S. provide a robust housing allowance to recipients, allowing poor renters to spend 30% of their income on housing. Vouchers are available, however, only to a small portion of qualified households in the U.S; a sizable majority of eligible U.S. households receive no housing assistance. Other countries, such as the Netherlands,

France, and the United Kingdom, provide housing allowances to more eligible households but at lower levels of assistance per household. The median housing allowance to households was \$7,200 in the U.S., \$4,988 in the United Kingdom, \$2,257 in France, and \$2,170 in the Netherlands. Housing allowances refer to demand-side subsidies. Income inequality in the U.S. also contributes to high cost burdens for the poorest renters who must compete with higher income households for housing. Finally, housing in the U.S. tends to be larger and newer than in other countries, which drives up housing costs.

Rental Housing: An International Comparison is available at: <http://bit.ly/2cu9XkC>.

Fact of the Week

U.S. Housing Cost Burdens for the Poor Compared to Other Advanced Nations



Housing and Elections

Getting Out the Vote, Voterization Webinar

It is likely that fewer than half of voting-eligible renters will vote in the 2016 election. The presidential elections of 2008 and 2012 were considered to have had high-turnout rates, with 62% and 59% voter participation, respectively. For renters, however, turnout rates for those elections were only 42% and 40%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey.

NLIHC’s Voterization efforts inform organizations and community groups interested in registering voters, engaging with candidates, and getting voters to the polls. The final presentation in the 2016 Voterization webinar series will be “Mobilization: Getting Out the Vote,” on Thursday, September 15, at 2:00pm ET.

The webinar will cover producing strong get-out-the-vote (GOTV) materials, using voter registration lists to conduct phone banks leading up to Election Day, and coordinating rides to the polls for people with disabilities or with transit access issues. Attendees will also learn about common challenges voters face related to ID requirements and voting without a permanent residence. The presentation will also discuss key considerations for states that allow early voting and voting by mail.

In case you missed the first two webinars in NLIHC's Voterization series, "Understanding and Overcoming the Challenges of Voter Registration" and "Voter Education and Candidate Engagement," the PowerPoint slides and recordings of them can be viewed online at <http://nlihc.org/library/voterization>. NLIHC also offers its Voterization Plan and Voterization Narrative Guide as resources to support the work of housing organizations engaged in nonpartisan electoral activities.

Register for "Mobilization: Getting out the Vote" at: <http://bit.ly/1Zh1AL2>

NLIHC's Voterization Plan is at: <http://bit.ly/1Y5Oekd>

NLIHC's Voterization Narrative Guide is at: <http://bit.ly/24nonv5>

For questions, contact the field team at: outreach@nlihc.org

From the Field

Low Income Louisiana Residents Face Severest Impacts of Recent Floods

Thousands of low income Louisiana residents face extreme challenges as they look to recover from the mid-August floods that damaged or destroyed more than 150,000 homes across 20 parishes. As the State of Louisiana and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) work to support the thousands of residents in need of disaster assistance, low income renters who already faced a lack of affordable housing and high housing cost burdens face a disproportionate burden and fewer opportunities for assistance.

The floods caused by heavy rains began August 12th and lasted 3 days, and among the 20 parishes affected was East Baton Rouge Parish, the most populous in the state. Most of the 150,000 homes flooded were rendered uninhabitable. Thousands of individuals and families made homeless by the floods have applied for disaster assistance, including temporary rental assistance. Louisiana was already dealing with tight rental markets, particularly for the lowest income renters. In 2015, the state had a shortage of 107,438 homes available and affordable for extremely low income (ELI) households, those with incomes at or below 30% of area median incomes. With many homes affordable for ELI renters destroyed by the floods and thousands of new low, moderate, and high income households looking for a place to stay, the rental market will tighten further, the number of renters with high cost burdens will climb, and long-term homelessness and housing instability will rise. Because they have the least resources and the fewest options, ELI renters will experience the crisis most acutely.

FEMA and the State of Louisiana are employing a variety of strategies to assist those impacted. FEMA has administered more than \$500 million to those in need, the majority of which has gone to rental assistance and home repair. FEMA and the State of Louisiana are providing rental assistance to both renters and homeowners displaced by the disaster. Most of this assistance comes in the form of vouchers, which residents can use to help them pay for rent and, under certain circumstances, stay in a hotel. The voucher program serves residents of assisted housing and HUD-subsidized private properties as well as Housing Choice Voucher holders and other displaced renters and homeowners. While the voucher program is robust, because the floods destroyed so many homes, few apartments are available for the disaster voucher holders to rent. FEMA also plans to provide some residents with mobile homes, which they stress are better than the troubled trailers provided after Katrina, many of which contained high concentrations of formaldehyde. As of September 2, however, just one family had

received a mobile home while 1,500 individuals waited in shelters and thousands more stayed in hotels or with relatives or friends. The slowness with which programs such as this have gotten started has left many affected by disaster with limited options.

In addition to rental assistance, FEMA is also providing some homeowners with up to \$15,000 through the Shelter at Home program. The Shelter at Home program is intended to help homeowners safely live in their homes while completing necessary repairs, returning to normalcy as quickly as possible. A similar program does not exist for renters, however. Landlords can request small business loans to repair rental units but are under no obligation to do so, leaving many renters forced to find a new place to stay either permanently or temporarily while waiting for their landlords to make the necessary repairs. Without additional assistance or preferences, low income renters will carry a disproportionate share of the burden and the greatest housing instability in the weeks and months to come.

Events

September 22 is National Renters' Day of Action

Tenant and housing justice groups and allies in over 45 cities across the country will take to the streets for the National Renters' Day of Action on September 22. The day of action is being coordinated by Homes For All (www.homesforall.org), a national campaign of housing and land justice organizations formed in 2013 to advance the belief that all people have a human right to housing.

Homes For All has released a number of national demands in advance of the day of action including a freeze on unjust evictions and rent increases, the adoption of a livable rent standard to ensure no family pays more than 30% of income on rent, the right of all tenants to organize without fear of eviction or retaliation, and the transfer of vacant, underused and foreclosed land to community control to create affordable housing and meet other community needs.

“The Renters' Day of Action will be the largest and most significant mobilization of renters in recent history. In almost every region across the country rents are rising astronomically, unjust evictions and homelessness are reaching epidemic levels,” says Darnell Johnson of Right to the City Boston, which is planning a citywide march. “We are in a national renter crisis. The time is now for mass direct action and urgent solutions at the local, state, regional and national levels to resolve this crisis.”

For more information on demands and a list of all actions planned, go to: <http://bit.ly/2crhG64>

For personal stories of families impacted by the renter state of emergency: <http://bit.ly/2cfzjEt>

For media inquiries, contact: Malcolm Torrejón Chu, malcolm@RightToTheCity.org 718-666-6872

NeighborWorks Training Institute Returns to DC

The next NeighborWorks Training Institute (NTI) takes place December 12-16, 2016 in Washington, DC. The NTI offers more than 100 courses in affordable housing development and financing, housing asset management, community engagement, community revitalization, housing counseling, nonprofit management and leadership, and many other areas. The Wednesday symposium at the NTI is titled “Creating Economic Opportunities: Sharing Strategies” and will explore practical ways of addressing individual, geographic, and systemic drivers of economic disparities in communities across the country.

More information about the NTI and symposium are at: <http://bit.ly/2aVM07A>

More NLIHC News

NLIHC Seeks Fall Research Intern

NLIHC is accepting applications for the fall 2016 research internship position. Interns are highly valued and fully integrated into our staff work. We seek students passionate about social justice issues, with excellent writing and interpersonal skills, and preferably with quantitative research experience.

The NLIHC Research Intern assists in ongoing quantitative and qualitative research projects, writes weekly articles on current research for *Memo to Members*, attends briefings, and responds to research inquiries.

This position begins in September and runs until December and is at least 20-30 hours a week. Two semester placements are possible. NLIHC provides modest stipends.

A cover letter, resume, and writing sample are required for consideration. In your cover letter, please indicate that you are applying for the fall 2016 research internship.

Interested students should send their materials to: Paul Kealey, chief operating officer, National Low Income Housing Coalition, 1000 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005 via email to pkealey@nlihc.org.

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