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## Homelessness and Housing First

### President Biden Calls for Ending Veteran Homelessness in 2023 State of the Union Address

President Biden delivered the State of the Union address before a joint session of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate on February 7. President Biden called for increased investments in quality and affordable housing and additional resources to end veteran homelessness.

“Let’s help veterans afford their rent because no one should be homeless in this country, especially not those who served it,” [stated President Biden](#).

President Biden [announced](#) a proposal to make housing assistance universally available to all veterans experiencing homelessness. The president’s upcoming budget will triple the number of extremely low-income veterans who can access housing assistance, paving the way toward an entitlement for veterans. The proposal builds on the Biden-Harris administration’s success in utilizing Housing First to permanently house more than 140,000 people (see *Memo*, [1/30/23](#)). By using a Housing First approach, the country has [reduced veteran homelessness by 11%](#) since 2020 and cut veteran homelessness in half since 2010. The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs announced last month that [more than 40,000 veterans](#) were permanently housed in 2022 alone using a Housing First approach.

NLIHC applauds the Biden administration for its commitment to end veteran homelessness and calls on the administration and Congress to bring these solutions to scale to ensure that every individual has a safe, quality, affordable, and accessible place to call home.

“The administration’s proposal to make housing assistance universally available to all veterans experiencing homelessness – combined with the administration’s strong leadership and commitment to Housing First – can help end veteran homelessness once and for all,” [said NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel](#). “Congress has a tremendous, bipartisan opportunity to build on the nation’s success in addressing veteran homelessness by focusing on what works and bringing it to scale for the more than 500,000 people experiencing homelessness on any given night and the millions more people on the cusp.”

To fully end America’s housing and homelessness crisis, Congress and the administration must increase investments in long-term solutions to America’s housing crisis. This process should start with ensuring rental assistance is universally available to all eligible households, preserving and expanding the supply of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes through investments in the national Housing Trust Fund and public housing, making emergency rental assistance programs permanently available to households in need, and strengthening and enforcing robust renter protections.

Read President Biden’s State of the Union address at: <https://bit.ly/3HNdo51>

Learn more about the president’s proposal at: <https://bit.ly/3I8c6Dp>

Read Diane’s Twitter thread on the State of the Union address at: <https://bit.ly/3HHevnm>

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## **Legislative Brief Released by Bipartisan Policy Center Includes NLIHC-Endorsed Housing Policies**

The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) released a legislative brief, “[Housing Supply and the Drivers of Homelessness](#),” on February 7. The brief supports key NLIHC-endorsed housing policies, including championing the Housing First approach to ending homelessness, establishing a permanent emergency rental assistance program, expanding the Housing Choice Voucher program, and eliminating barriers to building affordable housing.

In response to an increase in unsheltered homelessness, communities across the country are implementing harmful, dehumanizing measures that will make it even more difficult for people to exit homelessness. Efforts to criminalize homelessness and clear encampments without providing alternative housing options run counter to the strategies outlined in the Biden administration’s [All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#), which recommits the federal government to the [evidence-based Housing First approach](#).

The BPC report shares data on homelessness rates in the U.S. and research on the fundamental interplay between homelessness and housing supply to help policymakers advance a comprehensive plan that includes supporting evidence-based interventions and addressing the severe shortage of affordable housing. The report highlights research that Gregg Colburn and Clayton Page Aldern outline in their book, [Homelessness is a Housing Problem](#), which demonstrates that housing-related factors – not individual attributes or circumstances – explain regional variation in homelessness rates.

The brief recommends expanding Housing First permanent supportive housing interventions. BPC highlights the success of Housing First in [reducing veteran homelessness](#) and helping people experiencing homelessness obtain and maintain permanent housing. Additional solutions to the homelessness crisis include codifying emergency rental assistance programs and other COVID-19 supports that helped millions of families avoid homelessness during the pandemic; expanding the Housing Choice Voucher program to provide critical support to families with the lowest incomes; and eliminating barriers to building affordable housing by incentivizing state and local governments to eliminate restrictive zoning and land use policies.

Read the Bipartisan Policy Center’s legislative brief, “Housing Supply and the Drivers of Homelessness,” at: <https://bit.ly/3RJFN0U>

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## **National Coalition for Housing Justice Sends Letter Urging Biden Administration and National Park Service to Halt McPherson Square Encampment Sweep**

The [National Coalition for Housing Justice](#) (NCHJ) sent a [letter](#) to the Biden administration and the National Park Service (NPS) on February 6 urging the administration to immediately halt efforts to sweep encampments of people experiencing homelessness in Washington, D.C.’s McPherson Square and all other national parks in the absence of adequate housing. The letter

calls on the administration to build on the success of the [House America initiative](#) by working proactively with the District's government to ensure that unsheltered individuals are rehoused using best practices and evidence-based solutions. NCHJ sent a similar [letter](#) to District officials urging them to halt their plans. NCHJ is a group of national organizations, including NLIHC, dedicated to ending homelessness by achieving housing justice through pursuing racially and economically equitable policies that affirm the right of everyone to an affordable, safe, accessible, and stable place to call home.

NPS [announced](#) on February 2 that it plans to sweep an encampment of unhoused individuals living in McPherson Square two months earlier than scheduled – during hypothermia season – before all unhoused individuals in the encampment receive housing. As of February 2, only 15 individuals of the estimated 70 who live in the park had been approved by the District government to receive available housing assistance. Even for those who have been approved for housing assistance, there exist systemic barriers to identifying units and receiving services that make the prospect of rehousing them within the next 10 days unlikely. Furthermore, park residents have been waiting for months for help with case management, which was promised to them by the District government and which would help them find stable housing.

The letter urges the Biden administration to immediately halt the sweep and instead stand by the strategies adopted in the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) [All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness](#). The decision by NPS to sweep encampments in McPherson Square and elsewhere without first ensuring individuals have been connected to housing is in direct conflict with the agreements made by the U.S. Department of the Interior and other USICH member agencies. Moreover, a sweep conducted by NPS directly undermines the Biden administration's commitment to using a person-centered, Housing First strategy. As is made clear in the *Federal Plan* itself, the scheduled sweep will only further harm individuals struggling to survive and make it even more difficult for them to exit homelessness.

The letter calls on the Biden administration to urge the District government to immediately halt its efforts in order to provide stakeholders from community-based and philanthropic organizations and government, as well as those with lived experience, reasonable time to create and implement a plan to connect individuals living in McPherson Square to housing, as called for in the *Federal Plan*.

As outlined in the letter, NCHJ fears that any departure by the Biden administration from using evidence-based solutions undermines the [success](#) of the *House America* initiative, conflicts with the goals of President Biden's [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), and sends the wrong message to communities about how to address unsheltered homelessness at a time when harmful, dehumanizing measures to criminalize homelessness are gaining traction across the nation.

Read the letter to the Biden administration at: <https://bit.ly/3IbeGJb>

Read the letter to District officials at: <https://bit.ly/3JOR3Hn>

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## Budget and Appropriations

### House Republicans Begin Outlining Proposed Federal Spending and Benefit Cuts

U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on the Budget Chair Jodey Arrington (R-TX) released a [list](#) of potential federal spending cuts, totaling almost \$1.3 trillion, on January 8. The list was released the day after President Biden delivered his State of the Union address, in which the President repeatedly pledged to fight against any Republican attempt to make dramatic spending cuts a condition for raising the debt ceiling.

The proposed spending cuts include measures like revoking almost \$100 billion in unspent, unobligated pandemic aid; rescinding funds for environmental protection and conservation; and “ending spending on ‘woke’ programs.” The proposal would also increase work requirements for programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), both of which provide vital assistance to households with low incomes, helping them afford groceries and other necessities.

Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (D-CA) has repeatedly called for steep budget cuts as a condition for raising the country's debt limit, suggesting that fiscal year (FY) 2024 spending should be capped at FY2022 levels. However, the Speaker has also pledged not to cut defense spending, or funding for Medicare and Social Security, leaving non-defense discretionary spending – including funding for vital affordable housing and homelessness programs – squarely on the chopping block. House Republicans are expected to release a topline preview of proposed budget cuts in April, after the President releases his FY2024 budget request on March 9.

A [recent analysis](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) estimates that capping spending at FY2022 levels could result in an average cut of 24% across non-defense programs, depending on which programs are prioritized. “The non-defense programs under threat touch a wide array of public services that the federal government provides and that people and communities depend on, including public health; food safety inspections; air traffic control operations; the administration of Medicare and Social Security; housing and other assistance for families with low incomes; education and job training; and scientific and medical research, to name just a few,” noted the report's authors.

In addition to proposals for pursuing deep cuts to non-defense discretionary programs, proposals to limit access to federal benefits are beginning to take shape. Rep. Arrington's proposal would strengthen work requirements for recipients of SNAP and TANF assistance, likely foreshadowing proposals focused on other federal benefit programs, including affordable housing assistance.

Cuts to housing benefits – like work requirements, time limits, and other policies that impose needless barriers to housing – undermine housing stability, increase evictions, and lead to more homelessness. Cutting benefits does nothing to address the underlying cause of America's housing and homelessness crisis: the widening gap between wages and housing costs, and a severe shortage of homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes. Imposing arbitrary restrictions on housing benefits will not create the well-paying jobs and opportunities needed to

lift households out of poverty; rather, they will make it more difficult for households to maintain employment and achieve economic security.

### **Take Action!**

It is unacceptable to balance the federal budget by demanding cuts to programs that help the lowest-income households survive. There is a national shortage of approximately 7 million affordable, available homes for people with the lowest incomes, and only one in four households who qualify for federal housing assistance receives the help it needs. Without adequate federal funding for vital federal affordable housing and homeless assistance programs, households with the lowest incomes will continue to live precariously, only one missed paycheck or unexpected emergency away from housing instability, eviction, and, in the worst cases, homelessness.

The Campaign for Housing and Community Development Funding (CHCDF) is circulating its annual 302(b) letter, calling on Congress to reject harmful proposals to slash funding for federal affordable housing, homelessness, and community development programs and instead provide the highest possible funding for these vital programs in FY2024. You can sign the letter at: [p2a.co/2xztqvh](https://p2a.co/2xztqvh)

Visit our [Take Action](#) page to learn about ways you can get involved!

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### **End to Medicaid “Continuous Coverage” Requirement Threatens Healthcare Access for People with Low Incomes and People Experiencing Homelessness**

Medicaid’s “continuous coverage” requirement, which prevents states from disenrolling anyone from Medicaid even if their income or household size has changed, will end on March 31.

Created in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the requirement paused Medicaid’s normal policy of requiring enrollees to renew their coverage annually. The omnibus spending package that was passed in December 2022 permits states to begin the “unwinding” process by redetermining who is eligible for Medicaid. States can begin the process in February, March, or April 2023 and will have 12 months to finish their reviews, though states can start disenrolling enrollees as soon as April 1.

According to the U.S. Department of Human Health Services (HHS), an estimated [15 million people](#), including 5.3 million children, could be without medical coverage as a result of this change. HHS estimates that, of this number, almost half will face disenrollment despite continuing to be eligible for Medicaid coverage because of procedural hurdles in the renewal process like those involving changes in address, lack of a reliable mailing address, lack of language access, and lack of documents for verifying eligibility.

Many of those at risk of losing Medicaid coverage live in HUD-assisted housing, are unhoused, recently incarcerated, or aging out of foster care. While housing assistance will not be affected by loss of Medicaid coverage, being uninsured or underinsured increases the risk of medical debt and can require households to make impossible choices between paying for medical care and keeping a roof over their heads.

Current Medicaid enrollees should immediately contact their [state Medicaid agency](#) to ensure their mailing address and phone number are up to date so they are able to receive important notices and renewal forms. Enrollees can get assistance with their health insurance applications through [community enrollment assisters](#). Service providers can also help their clients navigate the renewal process and connect them to additional resources.

Learn more about the anticipated changes to Medicaid at: [bit.ly/3YFeoj7](https://bit.ly/3YFeoj7)

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## HUD

### **Proposed AFFH Rule Published; NLIHC Brief Highlights Five Positive Overarching Features**

The formal, [Federal Register version](#) of the proposed rule to implement the “Fair Housing Act of 1968” obligation to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH) was published on February 9. NLIHC has prepared a brief, “[Preliminary Highlights of Five Positive Overarching Features of the Proposed AFFH Rule](#),” based on HUD’s [preview version](#) (see *Memo*, [1/23](#)). NLIHC also issued a [media release](#) on January 23 applauding the Biden-Harris administration for developing the proposed rule. After an initial review of the text of the proposed rule, as distinct from the preamble ([summarized by NLIHC](#) in *Memo*, [1/23](#)), NLIHC is generally pleased with the proposed rule. NLIHC continues to study and assess the proposed rule and will provide a detailed, comprehensive summary and analysis at a future time. HUD will accept comments until April 10. NLIHC will offer sample comment letters that advocates should consider using.

The five positive overarching features of the proposed rule are as follows:

1. Greatly increased community engagement requirements.
2. Greater public transparency.
3. A more direct incorporation of the new fair housing Equity Plan’s goals, strategies, actions, and expected funding allocations into jurisdictions’ Consolidated Plans and related Annual Action Plans, as well as into public housing agencies’ (PHAs’) Five-Year PHA Plans and Annual PHA Plans.
4. Annual evaluations of progress toward achieving fair housing goals.
5. Clarification of and new emphasis on the need for a balanced approach to affirmatively furthering fair housing, an approach that recognizes the need to both invest in disinvested neighborhoods and preserve existing affordable housing as well as to take actions that enable protected class residents to move to areas that already have better community infrastructure and assets.

The Fair Housing Act’s “protected classes” are race; color; sex (which is further defined by the proposed rule as including sexual orientation, gender identity, and nonconformance with gender stereotypes); national origin; disability; familial status (i.e., households with children); and religion.



Even though NLIHC is generally pleased with the proposed rule, there will be suggestions and concerns of which advocates should be aware and that NLIHC will convey to HUD in a formal comment letter. For example, although the proposed rule frequently uses the phrase “affordable housing” and offers a detailed definition of “affordable housing opportunities,” the proposed rule does not define “affordable housing.” NLIHC will urge HUD to define “affordable housing” as housing that requires a household to spend no more than 30% of its adjusted income on housing expenses (rent or mortgage payments) and utilities. (This definition is known as the “Brooke Rule.”)

Find HUD’s preview version of the proposed AFFH rule at: <https://bit.ly/3wWsRLH>

Find the *Federal Register* version of the proposed AFFH rule at: <https://bit.ly/3RIYfa1>

Read NLIHC’s “Preliminary Highlights of Five Positive Overarching Features of the Proposed AFFH rule” [here](#).

Find NLIHC’s summary of the key provisions listed in the preamble of the proposed AFFH rule at: <https://bit.ly/3QSVzpM>

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## **HUD Releases Resource for Tribal Communities New to CoC Program**

HUD released a resource for tribal communities and organizations that are new to the Continuum of Care (CoC) program. The resource, “[CoC Program Resources for Tribal Communities](#),” is intended to provide Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) with information about the CoC program, including information about the program’s purpose, eligible activities, and funding opportunities. The resource is meant for Tribes and TDHEs that became eligible to participate in the CoC program to combat homelessness and housing stability in their communities as part of the “Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.”

In a [welcome letter](#) to Tribes and TDHEs included in the resource, HUD recognizes that while the “Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act” (NAHASDA) was designed to provide federal assistance for Tribes in a manner that recognized tribal sovereignty, the act also eliminated several housing assistance programs and replaced them with a single block grant program – the Indian Housing Block Grant (IHBG) – that allocated funding directly to Tribes. In so doing, HUD removed “Indian Tribes” as eligible applicants for funds made available under the “McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,” effectively leaving Tribes to rely solely on IHBG dollars to address homelessness among Native communities. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 included language allowing the participation of Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities (TDHEs) in the CoC Program, which is one of two primary funding programs for addressing homelessness. Given that Tribes have not had access to this funding source, HUD acknowledged a need to provide information and offer guidance to Tribes and TDHEs about the CoC Program. The purpose of the new resource is to inform Tribes and TDHEs about the CoC Program so they may choose whether to participate in the program now or at some point in the future.

View the new resource at: <https://bit.ly/3E0wrbA>

Read HUD's welcome letter at: <https://bit.ly/3DXdrue>

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## Congress

### Senate Banking Committee Holds Hearing on State of Housing

The U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs held a [hearing](#), “The State of Housing 2023,” on February 9. Witnesses included Christopher Herbert, managing director of Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies; Robert Dietz, chief economist and senior vice president for economics and housing policy at the National Association of Home Builders; and Lance George, director of research and information at the Housing Assistance Council. The witnesses discussed the ways the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the affordable housing crisis, summarized issues confronting renters and builders, and shared ideas about strategies that could help address these problems.

Committee Chairman Sherrod Brown (D-OH) began the hearing by drawing attention to the bipartisan collaboration involved in the selection of witnesses and the importance of adopting such an approach in gauging the nation’s current state of housing. Chair Brown reflected on the committee’s past actions and recommitted the committee to addressing housing, transit, and community development, explaining that “we’re starting this Congress with a hearing on housing because it is one of the most important issues facing families.” Chair Brown also emphasized the ubiquity of housing affordability challenges, which include rent increases, growing cost burdens for renters, and the worsening shortage of affordable housing, and argued that combatting the problem requires close collaboration across party lines.

Ranking Member Tim Scott (R-SC) agreed with the Chairman’s outline of the affordable housing crisis but recommended a different path in addressing it: curbing federal spending to reduce inflation. Ranking Member Scott criticized the Biden administration for ending federal apprenticeship programs and failing to address domestic supply chain bottlenecks. Citing the disparities in Black homeownership rates, Senator Scott called for the federal government to “begin responsibly helping families rather than doubling down on programs that fail to generate results.”

Christopher Herbert called housing market trends over the last few years “a roller coaster ride.” Dr. Herbert highlighted how the pandemic enhanced housing demand and restricted supply, which led to home prices and rents increasing at a “dizzying pace.” Mr. Herbert also pointed out the need for investments in housing to address the needs of an aging population and a rapidly deteriorating housing stock.

Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) asked Herbert about the federal government’s role in protecting tenants. Herbert referenced the importance of tenant protections to the health and well-being of renters, citing the nationwide eviction moratorium as one such successful protection, and pointed to a number of federal statutes that guarantee fair treatment for all homebuyers in the private market. Senator Warren emphasized the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing the affordable housing crisis that addresses not only supply but renter

protections, stating that “the problems that renters face go beyond the supply problem. In too many places across the country, renters have few protections, from needless evictions to excessive fees and exorbitant rent hikes.”

Robert Dietz identified “the primary and persistent problem” in the housing market as the lack of attainable, accessible housing. Dr. Dietz noted that the causes of underbuilding are complex and listed the “5 L’s” that limit housing production: labor, lots, lending, lumber, and laws. Dr. Dietz attributed the nationwide rise in housing costs to a lack of skilled labor, the high cost of building materials, the challenges of accessing construction financing, the existence of burdensome federal regulations, and counterproductive local land use policies. He argued that without alleviating these supply-side bottlenecks, housing costs – which account for approximately 40% of the Consumer Price Index – would continue to be a persistent driver of inflation.

Lance George [summarized](#) the needs of rural Americans, who make up 18% of the country’s population and reside in approximately a quarter of the nation’s homes. Rural markets, like urban markets, have been impacted by rising rents: 44% of rural renters are cost-burdened, and nearly half of these renters are paying more than 50% of their income towards housing costs. Mr. George stated that “race matters... especially in rural housing.” In areas like the Lower Mississippi Delta, border *colonias*, Native American lands, and regions visited by migrant seasonal farmer workers, residents live in homes that are twice as likely as homes in the rest of the country to be substandard and inadequate. Citing the needs of residents in rural Ohio, Chairman Brown asked Mr. George about the impact of allowing affordable Section 515 units to expire. Mr. George said that the impacts would be “profound and multiplying”: if Congress were to allow every Section 515 unit to expire, between 350,000 and 400,000 affordable rental units would be lost, and “tenants in these properties are among the most vulnerable,” having incomes just above \$13,000 on average.

Watch the hearing and read the testimony at: <https://bit.ly/3RRphvU>

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## Fair Housing

### PolicyLink Releases AFFH Comment Guide, Hosts “Proposed AFFH Rule 101” Webinar

PolicyLink released a [public comment guide](#) for the proposed Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) rule that was [posted](#) in the *Federal Register* on February 9. PolicyLink also hosted a webinar on the proposed rule and the public comment guide on February 8. A recording of the webinar, “Our Housing Futures: Proposed AFFH Rule 101,” can be found [here](#).

Speakers on the webinar summarized the need for an equitable AFFH rule and detailed how advocates can use the public comment process to strengthen the proposed rule. Angela Glover Blackwell, founder-in-residence of PolicyLink, explained that “opportunity should be where you live, and if it is not, you should be able to move where it is.” After commemorating housing justice advocates throughout history, including Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Dorothy Mae Richardson, William Byron Rumford, and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Angela

suggested that those joining the call were joining “a long list of freedom fighters.” Rasheedah Phillips (PolicyLink) laid out a brief history of AFFH, a preview of the 2015 rule, and a summary of the proposed AFFH rule. Thomas Silverstein (Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law) provided an overview and context for the 2015 rule. Natalie Maxwell (National Housing Law Project) spoke on ways the public comment process should be used to strengthen the rule and highlighted the “Equity Lens for Draft Rule Analysis” section of the [public comment guide](#). Nine equity considerations are listed to frame advocates’ public comments, from historical and systemic framing to equity through data and “reparative equity.” Natalie noted that “the proposed rule is the floor” and that if there are more actions HUD can take to increase community engagement or language access, for example, advocates should mention them in their public comments.

Finally, tenant leaders Sarah Yeung (Sojourner Consulting) and Lincoln Larmond (Boston Tenant Coalition) discussed ways organizers in Boston and Philadelphia have used AFFH as a tool to advance housing justice and called for local leaders to stay engaged in the *Federal Register* process. PolicyLink’s Jasmine Rangel and Tram Hoang ended the call by calling for cross-sector partners to submit their own public comment and include unique insights in their comments to call for a stronger AFFH rule. Specifically, the [public comment guide](#) cites example for partners in housing, education, transportation, environmental justice and climate equity, workforce development and economic equity, community safety and justice, and public health.

View a recording of the webinar at: <https://bit.ly/40PTU9g>

Read PolicyLink’s “Designing Our Just Housing Futures: Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Public Comment Guide” at: <https://bit.ly/3XbrvHD>

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## Emergency Rental Assistance

### New Collaborative Program between States and Localities Working to Expand Right-to-Counsel Protections Launches This Month

[Results for America](#), the [National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel](#) (NCCRC), [PolicyLink](#), and [Human Impact Partners](#) have begun accepting applications for Advancing Racial and Health Justice through a Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Eviction (ARHJ), a program presented in collaboration with [Healing Through Policy: Creating Pathways to Racial Justice](#), an initiative of the [American Public Health Association](#), the [de Beaumont Foundation](#), and the [National Collaborative for Health Equity](#). The application for the ARHJ program is available [here](#).

The nine-session ARHJ program will provide state- and locally based collaborative teams with expert guidance on how to enact, design, implement, and sustain right-to-counsel (RTC) policies and programs within their jurisdictions, with a focus on racial and health equity. The program will also allow member groups to network more effectively across state, city, and county lines, thereby creating a diverse coalition of organizations working to enact right-to-counsel policies and programs nationwide. [ARHJ builds on Advancing Housing Justice: Right to Counsel for](#)

[Tenants \(AHJ:RTC\)](#), a [Solutions Sprint](#) created in partnership with [Results for America](#), the [NCCRC](#), [PolicyLink](#), [Heartland Center for Jobs and Freedom](#), and [Red Bridge Strategies](#).

Eviction cases disproportionately impact low-income renters, [making it difficult](#) for tenants to access legal services when served with an eviction notice. Low-income families cannot afford private lawyers, while legal aid programs are frequently unavailable due to high demand and end up turning individuals away approximately half the time. As a result of these circumstances, tenants facing eviction will usually show up to housing court without legal representation. The NCCRC [reports](#) that, on average, for eviction cases nationwide, approximately 82% of landlords are represented in court, while only 3% of tenants are. To remedy the unequal access to representation, jurisdictions across the country have passed legislation establishing a right to counsel for tenants. The right to counsel is a legal assurance that eligible tenants will be provided with an attorney when faced with an eviction proceeding.

Right-to-counsel policies and programs are not only [effective](#) at keeping tenants housed and improving long-term housing stability, but they are also [cost efficient](#) for jurisdictions. Where right-to-counsel policies have been implemented (many are new and in the process of getting off the ground), the impact is clear. In New York City, the first city to enact a right to counsel for tenants, 84% of represented tenants were able to remain in their homes. In Cleveland, an evaluation of the right-to-counsel program showed that 93% of RTC clients avoided an eviction judgment or an involuntary move, and 92% of clients who wanted additional time to move and 97% of those who sought monetary relief were able to get it. Particularly critical at this time, 83% of RTC clients who desired rental assistance were able to obtain it. In Jackson County, Missouri, the eviction rate before right to counsel was enacted was 99% while in the first three months after right to counsel was enacted, the rate was less than 20%. Moreover, states and localities can save money by implementing this policy and preventing the various costs associated with eviction. In Baltimore, for example, for every dollar invested in a right-to-counsel program, the city and state are estimated to save \$6.24.

Since 2017, [three states and 15 cities](#) have passed right-to-counsel protections for tenants, an impressive pace given that no jurisdiction had enacted such a right prior to 2017. Since the pandemic began, right-to-counsel policies have been gaining popularity, and [nine states](#) and dozens of localities are now working to pass right-to-counsel policies this legislative season. For example, [Multnomah County, Oregon](#), will include a right-to-counsel ordinance on the ballot in May 2023.

To learn more about efforts to enact right-to-counsel policies and programs, visit: [http://civilrighttocounsel.org/highlighted\\_work/organizing\\_around\\_right\\_to\\_counsel](http://civilrighttocounsel.org/highlighted_work/organizing_around_right_to_counsel)

Teams interested in learning more about the Advancing Racial and Health Justice through a Right to Counsel for Tenants Facing Eviction (ARHJ) program and determining whether they qualify to participate can find more information [here](#).

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## **HoUsed Campaign for Universal, Stable, Affordable Homes**

### **Congresswoman Maxine Waters and Senator Sherrod Brown to Join Today's (February 13) National HoUsed Campaign Call for Universal, Stable, Affordable Homes**

[Join](#) today's (February 13) national HoUsed campaign call from 2:30 to 4 pm ET. U.S. House Financial Services Committee Ranking Member Maxine Waters (D-CA) will join the call to provide remarks, and U.S. Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee Chair Sherrod Brown (D-OH) will provide recorded remarks to discuss the outlook for affordable housing in the 118th Congress. Members of NLIHC's policy team will describe potential threats to HUD's and USDA's affordable housing and homelessness programs and share opportunities for advancing bipartisan legislation. We will also share a new [advocacy toolkit](#) for opposing budget cuts to essential federal investments in affordable housing and explain how you can get involved.

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## **Disaster Housing Recovery**

### **House Passes Two Pieces of Disaster Recovery Reform Legislation**

The U.S. House of Representatives [passed](#) two pieces of disaster recovery legislation on February 8, both sponsored by Resident Commissioner Jenniffer Gonzalez-Colon (R) of Puerto Rico. The bills, which were both unanimously passed last year by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, were reintroduced in January 2022 at the beginning of the new Congress.

The first bill, the "[Federal Disaster Assistance Coordination Act](#)," would create a study group to explore how the process for collecting a preliminary damage assessment – a catalogue of the impacts of a certain event typically needed for the event to be declared a disaster – can be made less burdensome for disaster-impacted areas. The group would also look for ways to speed up the assessment process and distribute responsibilities for the process between different agencies, ensuring the quicker disbursement of assistance.

The second bill, the "[Post-Disaster Assistance Online Accountability Act](#)," would create an online repository of information on federally funded disaster recovery projects, allowing the general public to review information on project cost and location. The repository would cover projects funded by agencies across the federal government, including FEMA, HUD, the Small Business Association (SBA), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The webpage would be housed on the [USAspending.gov](https://www.USAspending.gov) website.

Both bills will now move to the Senate.

Read the "Federal Disaster Assistance Coordination Act" at: <https://bit.ly/3XucG36>

Read the "Post Disaster Assistance Online Accountability Act" at: <https://bit.ly/3HTEZSH>

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## Disaster Housing Recovery Update – February 13

### Congressional and National Updates

Senators Rick Scott (R-FL) and Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Gary Peters have [reintroduced](#) a bipartisan bill seeking to mitigate waste, fraud, and abuse within disaster recovery contracting. The bill, the “[Disaster Contract Improvement Act](#),” would create a working group to research the problem of contractor fraud during debris removal operations and investigate whether modifications to federal policy are necessary to increase accountability and efficiency when contracting with companies to remove disaster debris.

A disaster relief consultant employed during the response to Hurricane Harvey pled [guilty](#) to federal corruption charges on February 7. The contractor filed fraudulent reimbursement requests of approximately \$250,000 for bogus travel and lodging expenses.

Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) [introduced](#) a bill addressing disaster recovery efforts in southern Florida. “[The Hurricanes of 2022 Disaster Relief Rectification Act](#)” would direct agricultural recovery assistance payments to be paid out as block grants to the state and create a process for waiving flood zone restrictions maintained by FEMA for the purpose of siting temporary trailers for disaster survivors.

Congressman Brian Higgins (D-NY) and Congressman Nick Langworthy (R-NY) [sent a letter](#) to FEMA requesting that the agency grant an extension for the currently ongoing preliminary damage assessment in upstate New York following Winter Storm Elliot. Preliminary damage assessments are typically required to be completed before a disaster declaration can be issued by the President.

The Chinook Indian Nation has been [petitioning](#) for federal recognition for years. Should recognition be granted, the Nation stands to gain substantive disaster recovery benefits.

Representative Greg Steube (R-FL) [sent a letter](#) to congressional appropriators requesting additional funding for disaster recovery following Hurricanes Ian and Nicole. Representative Steube cited the significant impact of the storms on Florida’s economy in his letter.

### State and Local

#### California

The City of Humboldt, the City of Rio Dell, and the California Office of Emergency Services are [continuing](#) long-term planning efforts for earthquake recovery after their area was impacted by shaking and tremors in late 2022.

Many renters in San Luis Obispo County impacted by recent flooding are [wondering](#) where robust assistance can be found. “Our role is just to help you get back on your feet,” explained a

FEMA public relations specialist. “[We] start the recovery process, not to get you back to where you were before the flood. Our role is limited in what we can provide.”

The ongoing storms in California [have left](#) many farmworkers in need of emergency financial support. Farmworkers in California have been unable to work during the storms. Farmworker families typically plan for months in advance to anticipate seasonal variations in work. But with the sudden storms, many are unable to afford rent. The Sonoma County government opened a \$1 million emergency funds to assist families. Meanwhile, some grape growers have observed that a \$2 million assistance fund is in operation but that no farm worker has applied for assistance because the [website](#) for the fund does not include an application for flood-related assistance.

## **Florida**

Florida residents impacted by Hurricane Ian are now working through the “[storm after the storm](#)” of endless efforts to access funds to recover via frustrating appeals, phone calls, and emails. Many households simply do not have a choice to take part in this slog while also trying to regain a sense of normalcy.

Denials of assistance and [mixed messages](#) about the availability of assistance and the application process are frustrating disaster survivors in Florida.

## **Kentucky**

Housing advocates are [continuing](#) their efforts to convince lawmakers to put \$150 million into the Affordable Housing Emergency Action Recovery Trust Fund (AHEART). Currently, the available housing stock in the state is more than 50 years old and requires maintenance before sheltering the over 800 Kentucky residents living in state parks and travel trailers. The AHEART funds could be used to construct or keep up 1,500 homes.

Millions in donations have been [given](#) to the Kentucky government to assist survivors of the western Kentucky tornados in 2021. The majority of those funds have not been spent; recovery workers and advocates blame this on concerns that the receipt of additional funds could endanger the ability of a survivor to access FEMA assistance, a \$3,500 cap on individual assistance, and the decision to funnel funds through long-term recovery committees that vary wildly in terms of capacity to administer large amounts of funding.

## **Montana**

An [op-ed](#) published in the *Independent Record* calls for more attention not only to the effort to build more housing in the state but to ensuring that the housing being built can survive wildfires and flooding, which have both recently impacted the state.

## **North Carolina**

Richard Trumper, the director of disaster recovery at the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management, [will move](#) to the state’s Department of Public Safety as a senior advisor for disaster recovery. The newly created position will assist ReBuild NC – the state’s disaster recovery program – whose staff were harangued by lawmakers earlier this year.



## **Puerto Rico**

Contractor ICF has potentially [received](#) a five-year, \$51 million contract to help the Puerto Rico Housing Department scale up funding programs for home repair and reconstruction in areas impacted by recent disasters.

## **Texas**

The Houston City Council will be [voting](#) on whether to utilize HUD long-term disaster recovery dollars for a 50-unit complex offering housing for youth transitioning out of foster care. The new building would provide additional wrap-around services for residents and will be managed by an existing non-profit working with foster care youth in the Houston area.

The Austin City Council is [reviewing](#) the city's response to a recent ice storm. The ice storm left many without power for days and required those in need of warmth to abandon homes in favor of city-run shelters. The city manager now faces a council evaluation for his oversight of the storm's response.

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## **Opportunity Starts at Home**

### **Research Finds Older Adults Benefit from Health and Housing Partnerships**

A recent [study](#) evaluating the Right Care, Right Place, Right Time (R3) program finds that collaboration between healthcare providers and affordable housing sites improves health outcomes for seniors. The R3 program encourages collaboration between wellness nurses and coordinators in senior housing on tasks like conducting assessments, seeking partnerships with other organizations, and tracking trends and data. The study finds that older adults living in sites offering the R3 program experienced lower hospitalization rates, fewer days spent in the hospital, and fewer readmissions, while also reducing costs. "Age-friendly health systems would do well to enhance partnerships with affordable housing sites to improve care and reduce service use for older residents," conclude the study's authors. Read the study [here](#).

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## **Research**

### **Older Adults Experiencing Homelessness Are Less Likely Than Younger Adults to Receive Permanent Supportive Housing**

A new report published by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH), "[Connecting Older Adults to Housing: Examining Disparities](#)," analyzes the ways older adults (aged 55 and over) exit homelessness. The report finds that older adults are less likely to receive Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) than younger adults and tend to rely on housing solutions outside of homelessness systems more often. The report also identifies racial and age-related disparities in the receipt of housing assistance among older adults experiencing homelessness: older Black and

Hispanic adults and adults aged 75 or older are disproportionately less likely to receive PSH, according to the findings.

Using data collected on homeless adults through the 2018 Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT), the authors found that older adults were most likely to exit homelessness through Rapid Rehousing (RRH) (16%) or PSH (18.9%). Older adults, however, were less likely to access these housing interventions than adults aged 25 to 54. While 48.3% of younger adults exited through RRH or PSH, only 34.9% of older adults received these services. Compared to younger adults, older adults were more likely to exit homelessness by moving in with family (15.5% vs. 6.4%), passing away before exiting homelessness (3.9% vs. 0.9%), or finding solutions outside of the homeless services system (16.4% vs. 7%).

Although PSH was still the most common pathway out of homelessness for older adults, the likelihood of receiving a PSH placement decreased with advanced age. While more than 22% of homeless adults aged 55 to 64 received PSH, less than 2% of homeless adults aged 75 or older received it. Nearly 23% of homeless adults aged 75 or older exited homelessness through RRH compared to approximately 15% of older adults aged 55 to 74. The authors offer some potential reasons for this disparity: homeless adults over age 74 might be underrepresented among chronically homeless populations that are typically targeted with PSH, existing PSH might not be able to fully accommodate the greater accessibility needs of the oldest adults, or RRH could serve as a bridge to other forms of subsidized housing targeted to older adults.

The authors also observed racial and ethnic disparities. Older white adults accounted for a little over a third of the older adult population experiencing homelessness but received over half of PSH interventions. All non-white groups were underrepresented among older adults receiving PSH. Older Black adults, for example, accounted for 48.6% of the older adult population experiencing homelessness but just 40.1% of the population receiving PSH, while Hispanics constituted 10.9% of the older adult population experiencing homelessness but just 3.6% of older adults receiving PSH. Older Black adults were the only non-white group to be underrepresented in RRH, where they accounted for 40.7% of older adults receiving the intervention and 48.6% of older adults experiencing homelessness.

Older Black adults were disproportionately more likely to exit homelessness through means other than the homeless services system. While older Black adults accounted for just under half of the older adult homeless population, they represented 57.6% of homeless older adults who exited by moving in with family, 68.9% of homeless older adults who exited homelessness into police custody, jail, or prison, and 60% of older homeless adults who resorted to solutions outside of the homelessness system. The authors suggest there could be institutionalized barriers preventing older adults of color from accessing homelessness assistance.

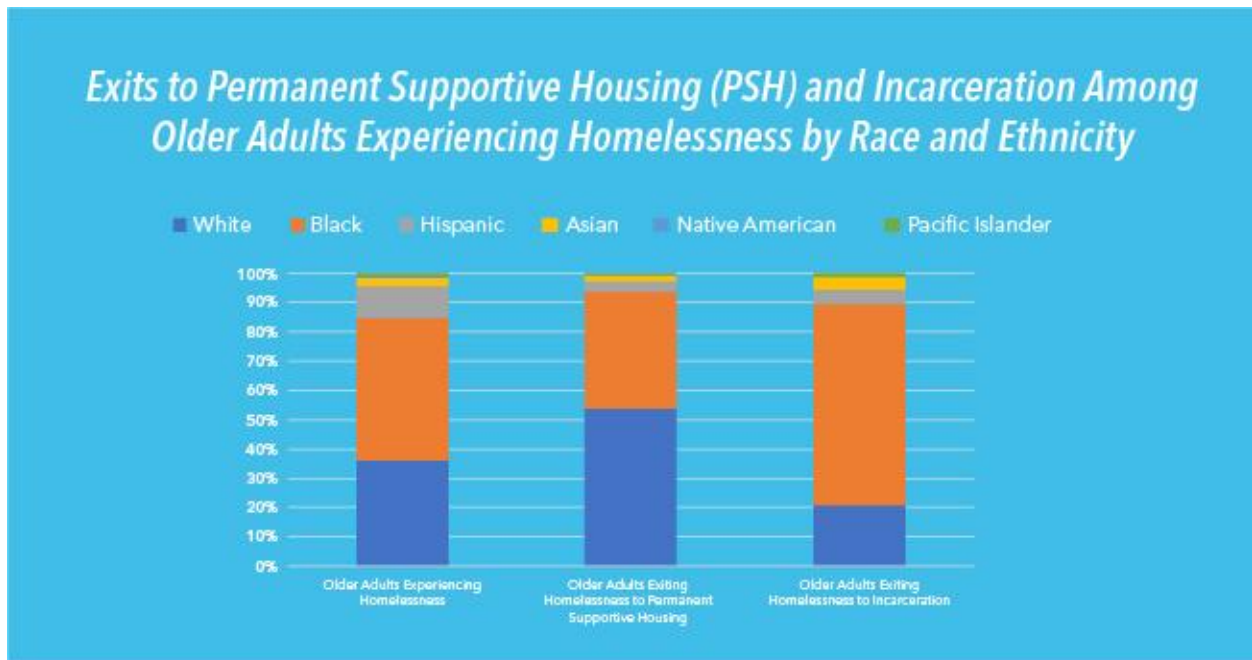
The authors conclude that their findings warrant further research into disparities for older adults experiencing homelessness. In particular, the authors highlight a need to better understand what drives disparities in pathways out of homelessness for older adults of color and the oldest adults. The authors also call for HUD to make homelessness data on older adults by race, ethnicity, and gender publicly available to help address inequities in the receipt of homelessness assistance.

Read more at: <http://bit.ly/3x0MfqK>

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## Fact of the Week

### Older Black Adults Disproportionately Exit Homelessness to Incarceration, While Older White Adults Disproportionately Receive Permanent Supportive Housing



Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2023). *Connecting Older Adults to Housing: Examining Disparities*. Retrieved from <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/connecting-older-adults-to-housing-examining-disparities/>



Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2023). *Connecting Older Adults to Housing: Examining Disparities*. Retrieved from <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/connecting-older-adults-to-housing-examining-disparities/>

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## From the Field

### Michigan Supplemental Spending Bill Invests in Housing and Community Development Programs

The Michigan legislature [approved](#) a \$1.1 billion supplemental spending bill that dedicates federal resources to housing and community development programs. Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed the spending package into law on January 31, making the bill the earliest to be signed into law in a new congressional session in Michigan since 1947. In addition, Governor Whitmer signed an [executive order](#) on February 6 to streamline the construction and preservation

of affordable homes and released an [executive budget recommendation](#) on February 8 that includes substantial resources for affordable housing.

“Michigan is facing a housing crisis, and CEDAM is thrilled to see our state leaders prioritize investments in a range of housing programs to tackle it,” said Jessica AcMoody, policy director at the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM). “Funding effective programs, including Michigan’s housing trust fund, will help our field achieve our state’s ambitious Housing Plan goals and ensure all Michiganders have access to a quality, affordable place to call home.”

The supplemental spending bill dedicates \$150 million to the creation of an affordable housing tax credit gap financing program. The governor’s office [estimates](#) that these resources will enable Michigan to build or refurbish 2,000 homes. The bill allocates \$75 million in federal funds for the Michigan State Land Bank Authority to make competitive grants to communities to address vacant and blighted properties. It also invests \$100 million in Revitalization and Placemaking Grants, which will be used to convert underutilized office, commercial, and community spaces into affordable housing and outdoor dining areas, among other things. The package includes \$25 million to create a state water shutoff prevention fund and \$50 million for the Missing Middle Housing Program, which invests in housing development for households with incomes that fall between 185% and 300% of federal poverty guidelines.

Following the enactment of the supplemental spending bill, Governor Whitmer also signed an executive order that reorganizes the state’s administration of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The [Michigan Strategic Fund](#), which is responsible for a broad range of economic development programs, previously administered CDBG. Under the new executive order, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) will oversee the program. The restructuring [is intended to](#) create more flexible funding options for housing projects and accelerate the timeline for home construction and renovation.

Two days after signing the executive order, Governor Whitmer released her [executive budget recommendation](#), which would invest nearly \$80 million in affordable housing programs. The budget includes \$50 million for fiscal year 2023 and establishes ongoing funding for the Michigan Housing and Community Development Fund (MHCDF). Although [MHCDF](#) has existed since 1966, the legislature has not always appropriated money for it. Securing sustainable resources for the state’s housing trust fund is a top priority for CEDAM and other housing advocates. The executive budget also proposes \$10 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the Attainable Homeownership and Apprenticeship Program, which supports the acquisition, renovation, and resale of properties in both urban and rural land bank inventories. It would allocate \$15 million of ARPA funds to improve living conditions and expand housing options for migratory agricultural workers and would direct \$2.6 million to implement the expanded Attainable and Workforce Housing Tax Credit programs.

The Michigan legislature and executive’s early focus on housing and community development in 2023 follows the release of Michigan’s first-ever statewide housing plan in September 2022 ([see Memo, 9/26/22](#)). To meet the plan’s goal of constructing and rehabilitating 75,000 homes, Michigan housing and homelessness advocates will work to build on this session’s initial wins

and push for more permanent investments in housing solutions, including those proposed in the executive budget recommendation.

To review a full list of CEDAM's policy priorities for the 2023-2024 legislative session, visit: <https://cedamichigan.org/policy/priorities/>

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## **NLIHC Releases Winter Issue of *Tenant Talk*!**

NLIHC released on February 9 the winter issue of *Tenant Talk*, our semi-annual newsletter designed to engage residents in housing advocacy. The new issue, [\*Advancing Tenant Protections: Building Tenant Power to Achieve Renter Equity\*](#), highlights the rapid growth of tenant protections in the U.S. and the role played by tenants in the movement for tenants' rights. Download a digital copy of the new issue [here](#), or [register to receive a free physical copy](#) in the mail. Digital copies will soon be available in Spanish. Please feel free to share links to the publication with advocates in your network.

History shows that [tenants play an important role](#) in shaping housing policy during times of crisis. Power imbalances have probably always existed between owners of shelter and those who need access to this shelter to survive, but these imbalances changed during the era of rapid industrialization in the nineteenth century, when tenancy became more common in many parts of the U.S. Since then, tenant groups have formed to fight against unjust living conditions, high rents, and evictions – and that's just to name a few concerns! In places with histories of tenant movements, such as New York City, the first tenant-related laws were passed as early as the [1860s](#), and new laws have been fought for by tenant groups ever since. These advocacy efforts have shown time and time again that tenants have the power to push for and enact essential protections, especially during times of crisis.

The new issue of *Tenant Talk* provides an overview of the latest developments regarding key tenant protections, such as the right to counsel, source-of-income protections, rent stabilization measures, “just cause” eviction legislation, and tenants' right to organize. The publication includes articles by renters and tenant advocates, including members of NLIHC's Tenant and Community Leader Cohort, as well as by people with lived expertise who have been impacted by tenant protection legislation. As always, the issue also gives updates on policy, racial equity, and research news.

Download the new issue of *Tenant Talk* [here](#).

If you're a tenant and want to be more involved in NLIHC's work, here are some ways to stay engaged:

- Publications like *Tenant Talk* are possible thanks to our members. NLIHC is a membership organization open to individuals, organizations, corporations, and government agencies. Join NLIHC as a member today at: <https://nlihc.org/membership>

- Join our next “Tenant Talk Live” webinar with and for residents on March 6 from 6 to 7 pm ET. Register at: [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_1oTKfLJ8TfCYIIBibtAOHA](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_1oTKfLJ8TfCYIIBibtAOHA)
- Register for NLIHC’s Housing Policy Forum 2023: Onward to Housing Justice, which will feature tenant leader sessions: <https://fundraise.givesmart.com/e/WoFjZg?vid=x2yg2>

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## Housing Policy Forum

### ***Evicted* Author Matthew Desmond to Launch New Book at NLIHC’s Housing Policy Forum 2023**

In addition to featuring a keynote address by acclaimed author and sociologist **Matthew Desmond**, NLIHC’s Housing Policy Forum 2023 will celebrate the launch of Desmond’s new book, *Poverty, by America*. The Forum will also offer participants an array of opportunities to learn about and discuss America’s affordable housing crisis and its solutions.

Matthew Desmond is a professor of sociology at Princeton University and the author of four books, including *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (2016), which won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Carnegie Medal, and the PEN / John Kenneth Galbraith Award for Nonfiction. The principal investigator at Princeton’s Eviction Lab, Desmond focuses his research on poverty, city life, housing insecurity, public policy, racial inequality, and ethnography in America. He is the recipient of a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship, the American Bar Association’s Silver Gavel Award, and the William Julius Wilson Early Career Award. A contributing writer for the *New York Times Magazine*, Desmond was named by *Politico* as one of the 50 people most influencing national political discourse in 2016.



**Matthew Desmond**

In addition to an address by Dr. Desmond, the Forum will feature a discussion with Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus; U.S. Department of the Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo; Federal Housing Financing Agency (FHFA) Director Sandra Thompson; and a keynote address by renowned scholar and social activist Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II.



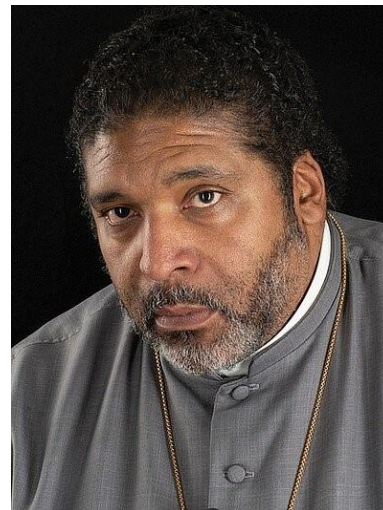
Congresswoman Jayapal (D-WA)



Treasury Dep. Sec. Adeyemo



FHFA Director Sandra Thompson



Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II

A full event schedule will be shared in the coming weeks.

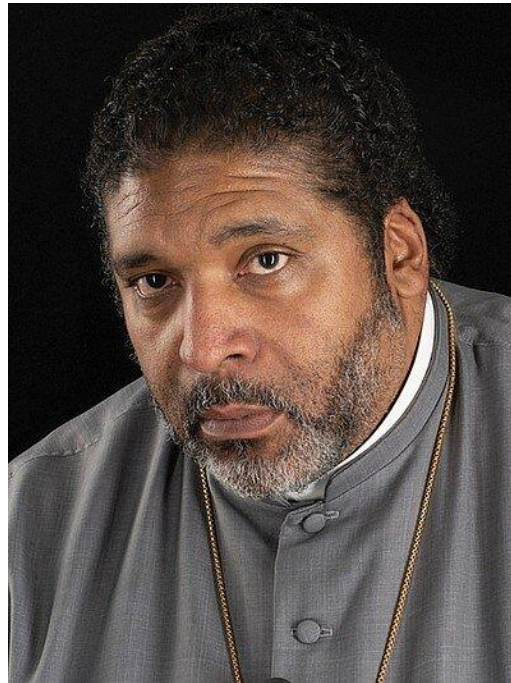
[Register today](#) for the March 21-23, 2023, Housing Policy Forum!

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**Renowned Social Activist Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II to Address NLIHC's Housing Policy Forum**

NLIHC's 2023 Housing Policy Forum will feature a keynote address by **Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II**, a renowned scholar and social activist. The Forum will also offer participants an array of opportunities to engage with and learn from thought-leaders, tenant and community leaders, policy experts, and leaders from Capitol Hill who will discuss the path forward in the fight for housing justice.

The Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II is president and senior lecturer for the organization Repairers of the Breach, a co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, and a bishop with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries. For more than a quarter century, he has pastored the Greenleaf Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro, North Carolina, and he is the author of four books: *We Are Called to Be a Movement*; *Revive Us Again: Vision and Action in Moral Organizing*; *The Third Reconstruction: Moral Mondays, Fusion Politics, and the Rise of a New Justice Movement*; and *Forward Together: A Moral Message for the Nation*. Rev. Dr. Barber served as president of the North Carolina NAACP from 2006 to 2017 and served on the National NAACP Board of Directors from 2008 to 2020. A former Mel King Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he is currently visiting professor of public theology and activism at Union Theological Seminary and senior fellow at Auburn Seminary. Rev. Dr. Barber has received the MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Award, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms Award, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center's Beloved Community Award, and the Puffin Award. Signed copies of his latest book, *We Are Called to Be a Movement*, will be available for purchase at the Forum.



**Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II**

In addition to Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, the forum will feature a discussion with Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus; U.S. Department of the Treasury Deputy Secretary Wally Adeyemo; Federal Housing Financing



Agency (FHFA) Director Sandra Thompson; and a keynote address by acclaimed author and sociologist Matthew Desmond.

A full event schedule will be shared in the coming weeks.

[Register today](#) for the **March 21-23, 2023, Housing Policy Forum!**

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## **NLIHC Encourages Advocates to Participate in Capitol Hill Day**

NLIHC invites advocates to participate in our hybrid Capitol Hill Day on Thursday, March 23. Participants will have the opportunity to meet with their members of Congress to urge them to oppose funding cuts to affordable housing and homelessness programs, expand resources for these vital programs, advance anti-racist policies, and support legislation that would improve the lives of millions of low-income people. Advocates can register to attend a February 28 webinar that will help prepare for Capitol Hill Day advocacy [here](#). Capitol Hill Day is part of NLIHC's *Housing Policy Forum 2023: Onward to Housing Justice*, which will take place on March 21-23 at the Hilton Capitol Hill Hotel in Washington, D.C. Register for the Forum at: [bit.ly/3Yfba5R](https://bit.ly/3Yfba5R)

In preparation for Capitol Hill Day, NLIHC will be hosting a webinar on February 28 from 4 to 5 pm ET that will cover our [policy priorities](#) and provide an overview of what to expect when meeting with members of Congress during Hill Day meetings. Staff from Housing Narrative Lab will also join this year's webinar to share how advocates can incorporate their own stories and experiences into their advocacy to create powerful narratives that makes the case for federal resources for affordable housing and homelessness programs. Register for the webinar [here](#).

If you would like to set up appointments for Capitol Hill Day, please contact your state's NLIHC housing advocacy organizer, whose contact information can be found [here](#). Meetings focused on your state and district are in the process of being arranged and scheduled. NLIHC will also offer additional resources for participants in anticipation for Capitol Hill Day.

Register for the preparatory Capitol Hill Day webinar [here](#).

Register for Housing Policy Forum 2023 [here](#).

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## **Leadership Awards Ceremony**

### **NLIHC to Honor Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico at Housing Leadership Awards Ceremony on March 22**

NLIHC will honor Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico at our 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Housing Leadership Awards Celebration on Wednesday, March 22, from 6:30 to 8 pm at the Hilton Washington DC Capitol Hill Hotel in Washington, D.C. The organization will receive the 2023 Sheila Crowley Housing Justice Award for its persistent efforts to ensure a just recovery – including access to safe and

affordable housing – in the aftermath of numerous disasters. Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico is a non-profit organization that provides free legal education to groups and communities in the defense of fundamental rights – especially the right to housing. The award is named for former NLIHC President and CEO Sheila Crowley, who led NLIHC for more than 17 years. The celebration will also honor John Parvensky and Representative Cori Bush (D-MO). Donate to NLIHC in these leaders' honor as an [individual](#) or as an [organization](#).

Ayuda Legal Puerto Rico provides free, accessible legal education and support to low-income individuals and communities in Puerto Rico to defend their human rights and ensure access to justice and an equitable disaster recovery. Through social impact advocacy and a deep-seated belief that impacted communities are best positioned to advocate for a dignified life, Ayuda Legal has helped communities across Puerto Rico access the tools and expertise needed to fight for housing justice.



Ayuda Legal emerged out of the initial response to Hurricanes Maria and Irma, which devastated the island of Puerto Rico in late 2017. Hurricane Maria destroyed an estimated 786,000 homes, and infrastructure costs related to the hurricane's impact have amounted to nearly \$100 billion. Despite this devastating toll, nearly 58% of the 1.1 million requests for assistance submitted to FEMA were denied, and in February 2020 – nearly two and a half years after the hurricane made landfall in Puerto Rico – between 15,000 and 18,000 families were still living under blue tarps. The impact of Hurricane Fiona, which struck late last year, showed that many of the problems plaguing the federal response to Hurricane Maria have still not been addressed and that numerous barriers to assistance remain in place.

Ayuda Legal lends legal support to thousands of disaster survivors each year and leads advocacy efforts around disaster assistance and recovery funds in Puerto Rico while also advocating for affordable, resilient housing infrastructure on the island. The organization pushes for the deep structural changes necessary to ensure that the needs of those most impacted by disasters and with the fewest resources for recovery are at the center of disaster preparation and mitigation and that the lessons learned during the recovery process in Puerto Rico are shared across the country and the world.

The dedicated advocates of Ayuda Legal provide lifesaving support to the people of Puerto Rico and fight every day to ensure people have safe, resilient homes and communities. What's more, they have gone about their work with grace, poise, intentionality, and a fire that serves as a model for anyone seeking to do similar work in their own community. NLIHC is honored to present this year's Sheila Crowley Leadership Award to Ayuda Legal!

In addition to recognizing Ayuda Legal, NLIHC will present John Parvensky with the 2023 Cushing Dolbeare Lifetime Service Award for his longstanding leadership in the fight for housing and health care justice and equity as an advocate, a supportive housing developer, and a provider of health care for the homeless. As CEO of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless for the past 37 years, he led the development of more than 2,000 supportive housing units. The Dolbeare Lifetime Service Award is named for NLIHC's founder, Cushing Niles Dolbeare, a pioneer of the affordable housing movement. Representative Cori Bush will receive the 2023 Edward W. Brooke Housing Leadership Award for leading a movement to guarantee housing for all. In her first term in Congress, she introduced legislation to end homelessness by 2025, led a demonstration on the steps of the U.S. Capitol that successfully called on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to extend the eviction moratorium, and introduced legislation to permanently implement an eviction moratorium throughout the pandemic. The Brooke award is named for Senator Edward Brooke (R-MA), who as a U.S. senator and later as chair of the NLIHC board of directors championed low-income housing.

Recognize these outstanding leaders by making a donation to NLIHC in their honor! Donate to NLIHC in these leaders' honor as an [individual](#) or as an [organization](#).

Your donation will be recognized in the Leadership Awards Celebration program, and your contribution will support NLIHC's mission to achieve racially and socially equitable public policy that ensures people with the lowest incomes have quality homes that are accessible and affordable in communities of their choice. Information about how to register to attend the Housing Leadership Awards Celebration is forthcoming.

To learn more about the awards and for event updates, please visit: <http://bit.ly/3TR14oN>

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## **NLIHC in the News**

### **NLIHC in the News for the Week of February 5**

The following are some of the news stories to which NLIHC contributed during the week of February 5:

- “Another \$700 Million in Emergency Rental Assistance Is on the Way to Struggling Renters” *Forbes Advisor*, February 6 at: <http://bit.ly/40JRR6n>
- “Unaffordable rental costs now plague 44 million people in every state” *The Atlanta Voice*, February 7 at: <http://bit.ly/3jIR05n>
- “Economic Inequality Places Most Eviction Risks on Blacks and the Poor” *The Seattle Medium*, February 8 at: <http://bit.ly/3KdfVsL>

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## [NLIHC Staff](#)

Lilly Amechi, Policy Intern  
Andrew Aurand, Senior Vice President for Research, x245  
Sidney Betancourt, Housing Advocacy Organizer, x200  
Victoria Bourret, ERASE Senior Project Coordinator x244  
Jen Butler, Vice President of Media Relations and Communications, x239  
Alayna Calabro, Senior Policy Analyst, x252  
Matthew Clarke, Writer/Editor, x207  
Courtney Cooperman, Housing Advocacy Organizer, x263  
Bairy Diakite, Director of Operations, x254  
Lindsay Duvall, Senior Organizer for Housing Advocacy, x206  
Dan Emmanuel, Senior Research Analyst, x316  
David Foster, Field Intern  
Ed Gramlich, Senior Advisor, x314  
Sarah Gallagher, Senior Director, ERASE Project, x220  
Jordan Goldstein, Communications/Graphic Design Intern  
Danita Humphries, Senior Executive Assistant, x226  
Nada Hussein, ERASE Project Coordinator, x264  
Kendra Johnson, Chief Operating Officer, x232  
Kim Johnson, Public Policy Manager, x243  
Mike Koprowski, OSAH Campaign Director, x317  
Kayla Laywell, Housing Policy Analyst, x231  
Mayerline Louis-Juste, Senior Communications Specialist, x201  
Khulud Mohammed, Communications/Graphic Design Intern  
Steve Moore Sanchez, Development Coordinator, x209  
Neetu Nair, Research Analyst, x291  
Khara Norris, Senior Director of Administration, x242  
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Diane Yentel, President and CEO, x225  
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